Backstreets
The Boss Magazine
DOUBLE ISSUE #83/84
WINTER 2005/2006
SILVER
25
ANNIVERSARY
EDITION
FEATURING
Devils & Dust, on the record and on the road
BOSS MILESTONES
The River turns 25
Born to Run turns 30
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS
Garry W. Tallent
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Suicide's Alan Vega
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8/11/05 Seattle, WA
Roger Froehlich Photo

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Backstreets
THE BOSS MAGAZINE SINCE 1980

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LETTERS

TWENTY-FIVE MILES

Dear Editor:

Congratulations on 25 years of *Backstreets!* Bruce's music and shows have been a big part of my life over the past 30 years or so. When I found your publication in the mid-'80s, you became a big part of my life as well. Thanks again for the quarterly and for all you do in the name of Bruce and his music.

Tony Boardman
via e-mail

IF MY HEART COULD TELL THE STORY

Dear Editor:

I just got the *Born to Run* box set today, and right now I'm watching the *Hammersmith* concert. I'm not one for bootlegs, so I'm seeing a young Bruce in concert for the first time. I'm amazed to think it was only nine years later that I would discover him for myself, and 21 years later here I am. Can you imagine being there and hearing some of that stuff for the first time ever?

I thought maybe I outgrew rock 'n' roll. I thought maybe because I'm not as ravenous about everything-Bruce in my late 30s as I was in my early 20s that maybe I overestimated Bruce's influence on my life. But watching this concert, seeing the older footage, listening to *Born to Run* from start to finish for the first time in years has me kind of choked up tonight and for all those nights 20 years ago when I would rehearse what I would say to Bruce should I ever meet him.

Thanks, Bruce!

Kevin Jeffers
Toronto, ON

ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Dear Editor:

I really appreciated your [online] comments about the response of Bruce's Italian audiences to his new show.

It's dismaying to read the comments on his official board from American fans, so desperate to detect signs of remorse for his recent political stance, and their obsession with the rarities in the *Devils & Dust* setlists.

I was at London (2) and really hoped he would perform *D&D* from start to finish and then a couple of encores—the way that Green Day approached their *American Idiot* show in Manchester earlier this year. It was still a fantastic gig, and his version of "Dream Baby Dream" was awesome, but by then people were looking at each other (and their watches) because they didn't know the song.

Bruce's Italian audiences clearly took him unconditionally, enjoyed the concert, and didn't feel compelled to compare notes later. Maybe his UK and American fans should chill out and do the same."Reno," after all, is an instant classic, and I'm so glad I was there to see it.

Steve Swift
Leeds, UK

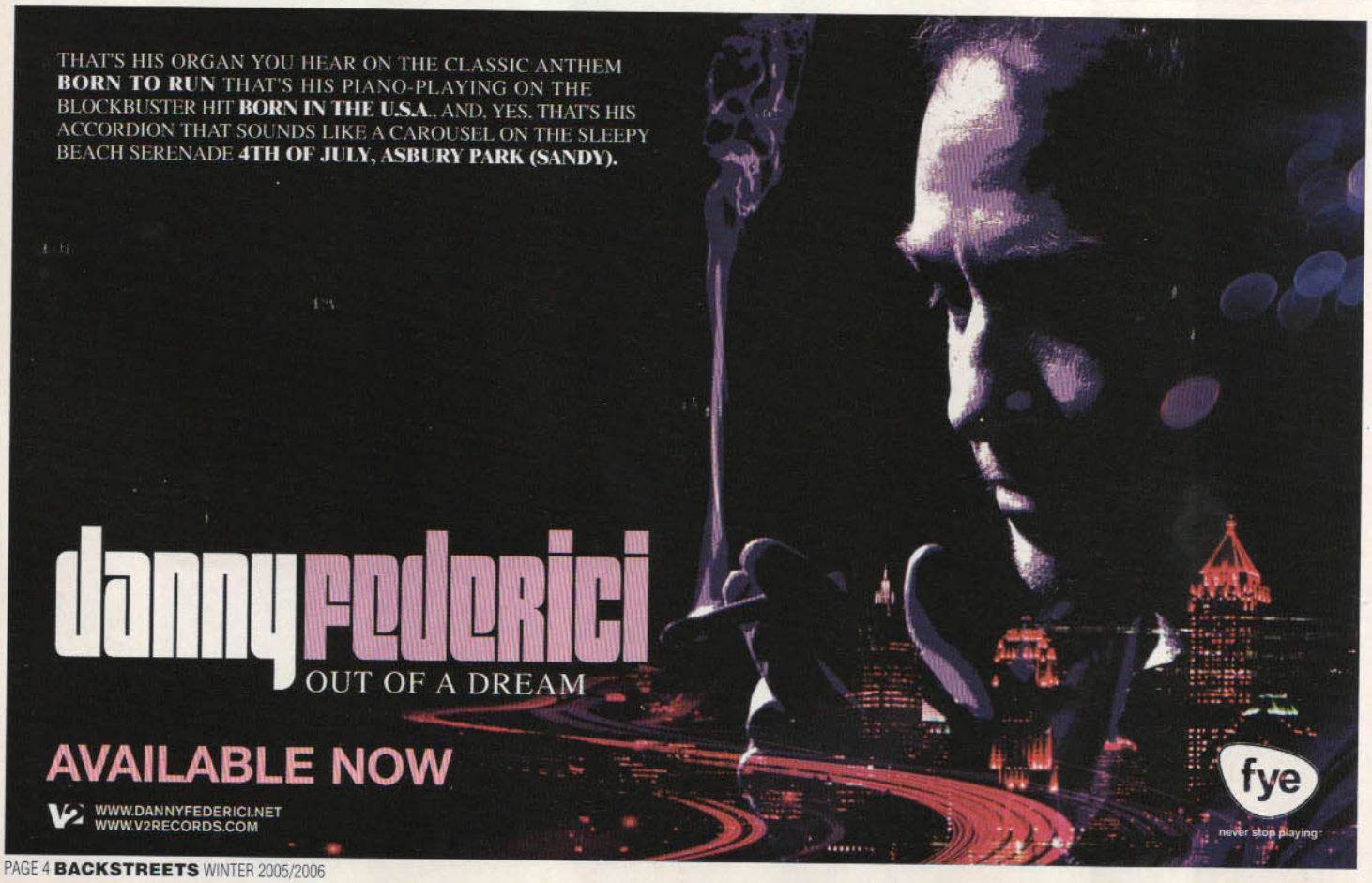
CLOUD NINE

Dear Editor:

I'm sitting here in my room, *Nebraska* is playing on my old stereo, and all I'm thinkin' about is yesterday. Yesterday at the Palalottomatica Arena [in Rome, Italy], Bruce took my spiritual connection with him to its highest point.

I've seen several shows here in Rome since my first in 1988, and each one was meaningful, thoughtful, and exciting at the same time. These days my memories fly back to the past, to 1996 when I realized the terrific combination between Bruce, his acoustic guitar, his harmonica, a small venue and a respectful audience. That night [4/10/96] Mr. [Ennio] Morricone was a row in front of me. At the time I was only a 23-year-old guy who didn't know how to manage all the information that later on I would find in songs, books, and films. For me Mr. Morricone, Bruce, and Steinbeck were only scattered pieces. It was after that April night that I started to put them together. Later I discovered Bruce's intros to "Badlands" during the *River* tour and how deeply all those pieces were connected.

Since then my knowledge of the Springsteen universe has increased. I collected boots, books, subscribed to your wonderful magazine, saw Bruce all over Europe with my brother. And it has been a big and happy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surprise to discover that, after such a long time, I still have something (a lot!) to feel inside me. Bruce led me through all my teens, marked all my experiences with his music, with his words... and still does it! But yesterday he went so deep into my soul that I still can't believe it.

Devils & Dust was released when I was struggling against my personal demons. "What if what you do to survive kills the things you love" is exactly what I had to face in these last months. Yesterday in Rome, the lights went out, and "Once Upon a Time in the West" started to fill the air, as in Milan two years ago. All the pieces were in the right place: Morricone was there, Bruce was alone again with his guitar, my girlfriend was by my side. I can't explain the feelings that I had during all the show. I was hypnotized, I was astonished, I felt so close spiritually to him like I never had been before. I don't know why, I don't want to ask myself why, it just came—every song, every word imprinted deeply on my heart. And when I took a look at my girlfriend she had a beautiful, ravished expression. And then there was the moment I realized he was playing "Racing," one of my favorites, and the song my girlfriend, not a huge Springsteen fan, loves most.

I could not tell if it was the inspiration Bruce took from my town, or if I was more relaxed for having seen him in Bologna two days earlier, but it was, to mention a well known *Real Paper* review, the night that Bruce made me feel exactly the way I needed to feel. So this is one for you, Bruce... to the best I ever had!

Emiliano Stella
Rome, Italy

TIME IS PASSIN' BY

Dear Editor:

I just wanted to request a refund for the two tickets I purchased for the concert at the Xcel in St. Paul. The show was awful! I also did not appreciate the fact that he was 45 minutes late in starting and didn't even apologize. We left after the fourth song. Not too impressed with a harmonica and especially not to pay $87.50 for each ticket!

Mara Evenson
via e-mail

HEADLINE NEWS

Dear Editor:

My second favorite performer next to Springsteen is Alice Cooper. So imagine my surprise when I started reading the Letters section of *Backstreets* #82. Too funny! Never thought I'd see the day where 'Ol Black Eyes would wind up in *Backstreets* somehow. Works for me.

Naturally, I went and pulled the last few issues out, to see if this has been an ongoing joke of yours, and sure enough, picked up on the Dylan and R.E.M. titles right away. Anxiously awaiting some Maria McKee in the next year or so.

Paying closer attention from now on...

Dave Melbourne
via e-mail

IT'S MY TURN NOW

Dear Editor:

I have never actually written a "letter to the editor," but after much thought and self-righteous indignation, I just had to respond to Mike Walk's letter in *Backstreets* #82. I fear Mr. Walk has completely missed the point. Sadly, "Reno" is just a song about broken people—nothing more simple than that. Its graphic nature is necessary to convey the hopelessness and tragedy of both willing participants to the act, ultimately ending with the woman completing her self-humiliation with her almost laughable, post-fuck toast: "Here's to the best you ever had." Well, of course it's not. The self-loathing of that particular line breaks my heart for her situation.

I suspect Mr. Walk has forgotten Johnny Cash's (circa 1956) "Folsom Prison Blues" and the infamous line, "I shot a man in Reno, just to watch him die" when he queries *Backstreets* readers, "Can you imagine Johnny Cash or Bob Dylan singing lyrics like this?" Does he mean he *can't?* I do not understand how anyone could find a consensual sexual act—albeit explicit—"offensive" when compared to the inhumanity of murder solely for the sake of voyeurism and pure curiosity. I can't think of a single more offensive act.

Is it that, in "Reno," she allows herself to be sodomized for an

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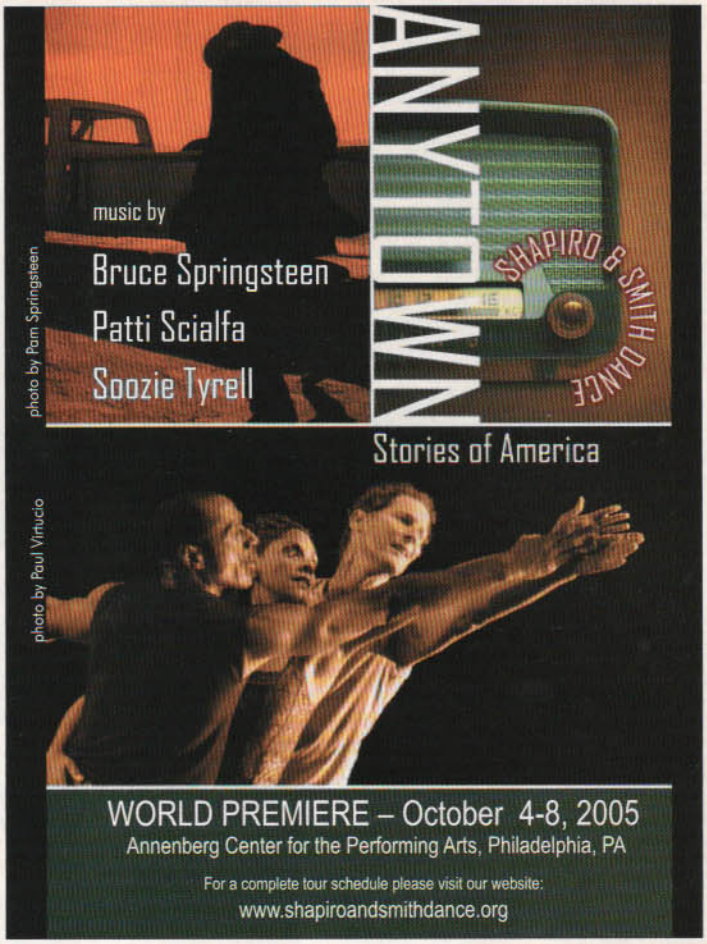

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BOSS-A-MONTH

NEW CALENDARS AND MORE FROM BACKSTREET RECORDS

2006 BRUCE CALENDAR

It's back! We suffered through 2005 without an official Springsteen calendar, but the new year is looking brighter already. The 2006 model is a Devils & Dust wall calendar, and it's officially licensed, with glossy stock and high quality Boss-a-month photos by D&D cover photographer Anton Corbijn.....$13

UNCUT — NOVEMBER '05

This issue of the UK's *Uncut* magazine features a beautiful cover shot of Springsteen, and a 12-page feature inside, "Bound for Glory: The Making of *Born to Run*." With exclusive portraits by *Born to Run* photographer Eric Meola." *(Includes bonus CD of "Tracks inspired by the Boss")*.....$12

MOJO — JANUARY '06

Another Springsteen cover on the U.K's MOJO magagazine huge, 20-page interview feature inside. Bruce talks with Phil Sutcliffe at length and in-depth—a wonderful glimpse into Bruce's current state of mind, and a must-read. With beautiful, exclusive portraits by Danny Clinch, and fun sidebars that fill it all out in typically exhaustive MOJO fashion. *(Includes bonus CD (no Bruce content), "The Great American Songbook")*.....$12

SUMMER 2003 TOURBOOK

The official tourbook from the final leg of the *Rising* tour, a great souvenir with color and B&W photos of Springsteen and the band, onstage and off. It's a beautiful tribute to the E Street Band, highlighting every member with individual spreads of photographs, as well as quotes and carnival-inspired illustrations. 11" x 14", 44 pages.....$20

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BORN TO RUN TEE
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B.U.S.A. TEE
Album song titles in color on back
L, XL **$20**

FLOOD AID 2004 TEE
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Continued from page 5

extra 50 bucks? Or is it the fact that she slightly masturbates herself that "out-offends" Johnny Cash's single heinous act? I don't get it. Truth is, both stories need to be told... and Reno must be a helluva place!

Roxy Ricci
Baton Rouge, LA

HAPPY RADIO

Dear Editor:

Your excellent feature on the Boss Jocks brought back fond memories of the DJ who did more than anyone to foster my early love of Bruce's music: Roger Scott.

Growing up in England in the late '70s, you were lucky if you heard Bruce on the radio once a year (and then it was always "Born to Run"). The shining exception was the afternoon show on London's Capital Radio. Pretty much every weekday between 3:30 and 4:00 p.m., Roger Scott would play a track by Bruce, or something with a Bruce connection. Roger's enthusiasm was infectious, and I've met many fans since who tell the same tales of relying on Roger for their daily Springsteen fix.

In 1988 he left Capital for BBC Radio 1, where the rest of the country briefly had a chance to share his encyclopedic knowledge of music and his inclusive, unflashy broadcasting style. But sadly, Roger died of cancer the following year, aged just 46. It felt like losing a friend.

Tim Turner
London, England

CALIFORNIA SOUL

Dear Editor:

You had the usual fine, quality magazine this issue [#82], but what really ratcheted it up a notch was the superb John Fogerty interview. I had the pleasure of meeting him back in 1997 when he toured to support *Blue Moon Swamp*. I expected a bitter, sullen man—after all, he hadn't toured for at least ten years! What a surprise it was to discover that he was a joyful, contented man who was more than ready to rock. He was extra kind to the fans who wanted to meet him after the show, signing every item and shaking every hand. My admiration and esteem for John Fogerty soared that night.

I really loved the "Creedence Covers Rundown" sidebar, and I envy every single person that got a chance to witness Bruce and John on the same stage at the Vote for Change performances. This issue of *Backstreets* was extra special for me—I can't thank you enough!

Stephen Desmond
Cerritos, CA

STOP THE WAR NOW

Dear Editor:

I hesitate to keep the controversy over Bruce's political stance alive, but this has been on my mind for some time and I would like to give my perspective on it. I am, compared to most Bruce fans, a novice. Although my two sons have been fervent fans for many years, I didn't convert until the *Rising* CD and tour. After listening to most of his albums in a relatively short period of time, I certainly was not surprised with Bruce's political stance and his support of John Kerry. As my son (the editor of this publication) has mentioned, my politics are largely conservative and right leaning. So how did I become an ardent fan? Well, like most of his politically conservative fans (hopefully,) I believe that, in the end, the message of his music is not left or right but universal. Bruce is a humanist. He and I don't disagree about where we want to go, just how to get there. So let's focus on the music and the message and let the specific path to the Promised Land be debated elsewhere.

Ray Phillips
Roswell, GA

WE'LL FIND A WAY

Dear Editor:

I am a *Backstreets* subscriber and longtime fan of Bruce Springsteen who lived in New Orleans and was able to evacuate safely out of town. I was born here and had never evacuated from a storm before, but I felt strongly that I should leave this time.

My husband and I raced against time to get the house boarded up; I began to pack suitcases, and it is so odd having to choose what means the most to you—and to narrow down those choices, knowing that you can't take everything. But I managed to pack some pictures and valuables. I decided to bring along my Bruce tourbooks, articles, and ticket stubs from the few shows I was lucky enough to see in other cities as he doesn't come around New Orleans. These performances meant the world to me; his music has been my constant companion and source of comfort during difficult times in my life.

We left around 3:30 a.m. Sunday morning and decided to go east to stay with friends in Florida. The next day the storm hit, and we watched and listened to the horrible details. When the 17th Street canal floodwall was breached and water rushed into the city—we live a couple of blocks away and realized that our house would be underwater. Then the looting and horrible scenes of people needing help were shown. The lack of an organized and swift effort to bring in help was deplorable. Then the reality of not going back home for a long time set in. We didn't bring a lot of clothes, because we thought we would be home in a few days. Communication was nearly impossible—it took us a week to reach some family members, let alone to find out about job status, bank balances, credit card bills. The most mundane things take so long to accomplish.

So we're like gypsies, moving from place to place—we left Florida and drove to Texas to stay with family. We are trying to recover as best as we can. My husband still has his job, which is temporarily located in Houston. We'll be moving there soon. The future—who knows? Our house is still underwater, and we can't salvage anything yet; my job status is still unknown; and we are expecting our first child in January. Plus, my husband's job may be transferred back to New Orleans in the near future. There are many other residents like us who worked hard to have a nice home and now have nothing. We have met some wonderful, compassionate people along the way that have given us some hope. I've learned to never take anything for granted again, as your entire life can change in one day. At least all of our family is safe—and I grabbed most of my Bruce CDs.

Lori Dahl
Memphis, TX

the backstreets jukebox

1. E Street Radio
Sirius Satellite Radio (Channel 10)

2. Kanye West
Late Registration
Roc-A-Fella (CD)

3. Wilderness
Wilderness
Jagjaguwar (CD)

4. Portastatic
Bright Ideas
Merge (CD)

5. Matthew Sweet
Kimi Ga Suki
RCAM/Superdeformed (CD)

6. Various Artists
One Kiss Can Lead to Another: Girl Groups Lost and Found
Rhino (4CD)

7. Eric Matthews
Six Kinds of Passion Looking for an Exit
Empyrean (CD-EP)

8. Greg Dulli
Amber Headlights
Infernal (CD)

9. Jimmie Dale Gilmore
Come on Back
Rounder (CD)

10. Supergrass
Road to Rouen
Capitol (CD)

10 records that helped make this issue possible

THE BACK TO STREETS

I guess it's 25 years gone by now...

Hi Ho Silver-o!

By Christopher Phillips

Back in the days of the *Backstreets* Boss Hotline—the weekly telephone message that was our pre-internet means of getting news out between issues—we often used to offer a Boss History Lesson. Really, it was mainly a way to have something to say during slow news weeks (which there were considerably more of back then)—but it was fun, too. We'd pick something that happened that particular day or that particular week in Bruce history, and it was usually a piece of cake.

Take today: I'm writing this on December 7—most notably, the 64th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. For the *Backstreets* Boss History Lesson, though, the options would be staggering. Thirty-three years ago today, Springsteen and the E Street Band played an afternoon show at Sing Sing prison (it's true!). Twenty-eight years ago this week, Bruce was playing "Heartbreak Hotel" with Robert Gordon and Link Wray. Next week marks 27 years since Springsteen's legendary Winterland stop on the *Darkness* tour, aired live on 12/15/78. Tomorrow is the 25th anniversary of John Lennon's death, when Springsteen was in the midst of a three-night stand at the Spectrum in Philadelphia. "It's an unreasonable world, and you have to live with a lot of things that are just unlivable," Bruce told the Philly crowd the following night, a quarter-century ago, at one of the band's most intense performances ever. "It's a hard thing to come out and play... but there's just nothing else you can do."

This week in 1981, "Santa Claus is Comin' to Town" was officially released for the first time. Twenty-one years ago tonight, I saw my very first Springsteen show: the 12/7/84 Tallahassee stop of the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour; 18 years ago tonight, Bruce was paying tribute to the late Harry Chapin, with an acoustic performance of "Remember When the Music" at Carnegie Hall. 15 years ago today, Springsteen was at Soundworks West in L.A., recording "Over the Rise." On this night in 1992, Bruce was back at the Spectrum, this time with a new band—and exactly one year later he was in that city again, with Jonathan Demme filming as he walked the streets of Philadelphia. Springsteen paid tribute to Bob Dylan at the Kennedy Center Honors on this day in 1997. Four years ago, he was playing his fourth of five 2001 Holiday Shows in Asbury Park, featuring the world premiere of "You Sexy Thing" with Bruce Hornsby; two years ago, it was the second of three Holiday Shows featuring Sam Moore.

And that's just today. Point being, there are anniversaries everywhere we turn. Some of those above, obviously, are more noteworthy than others. But stick around long enough, and there won't be a day that goes by when you can't commemorate *something*. Over the years, we've chosen to mark some significant milestones in these pages: the tenth anniversary of the Christic Institute benefits; the 20th anniversary of the Night for the Vietnam Veteran; the tenth of *Born in the U.S.A.* But for Bruce himself, commemorating his own past has always seemed low on his list, so it's all the sweeter that he and Columbia made the effort to celebrate the 30th anniversary of *Born to Run* in high style. As *Backstreets* Assistant Editor Andrew Massimino recently said to me, "It's not the anniversary that matters, it's what you *do* on the anniversary." And if we need an occasion to air the vaults that way, then by all means, let's celebrate. The 30th anniversary of *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, after all, is just two-and-a-half years away....

So while the Boss World at large celebrates Springsteen's 1975 masterpiece, we're marking a milestone of our own: with this issue, *Backstreets* Magazine has been publishing for 25 years. We couldn't let that pass without doing something special, so the issue you're holding in your hands is the biggest one ever, by far. Anniversary double issues have become something of a tradition for us—for our tenth year (*Backstreets* #34/35), our 15th (#50/51), and our 20th (#68/69). The biggest those ever got was 68 pages; with this one clocking in at 124 pages, hell, we could have called it a triple. But we figured for our silver anniversary something special was in order. In addition to the unprecedented size, it's also the longest we've ever taken to put an issue of the magazine to bed. We hope you'll find it worth the wait. Despite the number of pages, we still weren't able to pack everything in—look for more on *Born to Run* (as well as the final leg of the *Devils & Dust* tour) in early spring. We did find room for one other anniversary we felt should not be ignored, the release of *The River*, which shares its 25th with us. In this issue, Jim Cullen takes a look back at 1980 and what was happening in the world as that double album (and this magazine) came onto the scene.

So this is what we've been doing this year. As for what we did on our anniversary—well, it was a perfect way to celebrate. On the night of October 24—exactly 25 years to the day after founding editor Charles Cross handed out copies of *Backstreets* #1 at Springsteen's Seattle stop on the *River* tour—we were, where else, at a Springsteen show. Associate Editor Jonathan Pont flew down from New York to hit the Richmond Coliseum show with the office crew—Andrew, John, and myself. As luck and one tiny connection would have it, we scored front-row seats, for just the second time in my life. Couldn't have happened on a more fitting night.

Talking to my old friend and mentor Charles Cross afterward reminded me that seeing the Richmond show was all the more appropriate. *Backstreets* readers are likely familiar with some of the "big nights" for Charley: that rainy night in Seattle 25 years ago, or the 12/20/78 mindblower he wrote about in the first issue of this magazine. But I'd nearly forgotten that his passion for Springsteen was really forged in hometown of Richmond, VA.

Here's what Charley wrote later that week for us to share with you:

"Though so much has been written over the years about the role of Seattle and some of the seminal shows I saw there in the founding of *Backstreets*, in truth the story of Bruce's early career, and my early life, began in Richmond. When I saw Springsteen play a concert at the Mosque in the summer of 1975, I was positively transfixed—and it has added poignancy, looking back now, since I was born just a few blocks away. On my bedroom wall right now hangs an Alfred Wertheimer photo of Elvis Presley kissing a girl backstage. I'd always loved the picture but was even more impressed when Wertheimer told me it was taken backstage at the Mosque. That Springsteen would play a show in Richmond on the exact 25th anniversary of *Backstreets* is just one more piece of the serendipity of it all.

"No matter how much I wanted to go, I didn't get a chance to go to this Richmond show—my life has gotten far more complicated in the years since *Backstreets* began. On October 24 of this year, I walked my five-year-old to school, which is another avenue of my life I could have never even imagined years earlier. And that night I had a reading near Seattle for my new book, a biography of Jimi Hendrix *[Room Full of Mirrors]*. What does Jimi Hendrix have to do with Bruce Springsteen? Maybe not a lot, though Garry Tallent [interviewed in this issue] always used to tell the story that he was a guitar player until he saw Hendrix perform, whereupon he switched to the bass.

"It is absolutely amazing to me that 25 years have gone by—there are so many times in my life where I don't even feel 25, yet a look in the mirror confirms the truth. I'm no longer so carefree and youthful that I can follow Bruce around like I was once able to, no longer so young that I would even imagine standing up for four hours a night (thankfully this new tour is kinder on those of us with bad knees), and in truth Springsteen, despite the major role his music has played in my life over the past 25 years, is now the starting-off point for my love of great music, and not the be-all and end-all. There once was a subscriber to this magazine I met (who lived in Richmond, of all places), who told me he only owned Springsteen records—his collection contained nothing else. That myopia seems almost dangerous, though my own youthful boosterism towards Springsteen—loving his music enough to start a fanzine about him—also seems odd to me now, admittedly.

"After the recent Richmond show, Chris told me about his front row seat and how he could have reached out and touched Springsteen. I remember at that Mosque show some 30 years ago how Springsteen actually played a guitar solo with both feet planted on the two armrests of my tenth-row seat. That's the kind of intimacy that Bruce at his best has fostered with his fans, and it was that kind of closeness that this magazine has always sought to establish—not with Bruce himself, but among the body of fans that appreciate his music."

One thing Charley doesn't say here is what he told me on the phone after the August 11 *Devils & Dust* show at Seattle's Key Arena—that it was the best Springsteen concert he'd seen since Christic. I've been similarly blown away by shows I've seen on this tour, consistently knocked out by how Bruce continues to challenge his audience and himself this far into his career. Charley and I are also on the same page in terms of Springsteen's music being just part of the soundtrack of our lives. But I continue to be reminded of why, of all the artists whose music fills my house on a Sunday morning, or comes blasting out of my car stereo, or shuffles through my iPod, it's Springsteen who I can rely upon most to take me to new places, whose music has depths I can get lost in—who is most fanzine-worthy, dammit. And the fact that he can continue to surprise us—creating performance art that evokes Tom Waits and Laurie Anderson one minute, sitting down at the grand piano the next to break out a heartwrenching and majestic "Valentine's Day" for its first performance ever—makes all these anniversary celebrations feel even more like special milestones on the way to somewhere rather than commemorative plaques at the end of the road.

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(212) 975-4321

Dear Radio Programmer:

Enclosed is one of the most eagerly awaited albums of 1980, and one I am sure you will enjoy -- THE RIVER, by Bruce Springsteen. The consumer anticipation for this album has been incredible and the excitement it will generate will benefit radio as well as record and tape sales.

However, because the release of this album is such a special event, I would like to point out a key problem which hurts us all, and that is home taping of albums off the air. Our market research indicates that over 50 million unit sales were lost in 1979 due to this practice and that it cost the record industry over $400 million in revenues. Unfortunately, it is also a trend which is increasing.

Of course we want you to play songs from the album, but I would like to make a personal request that you refrain from playing the entire album, or major portions of it, without commercial breaks. The sales which would be lost by playing the entire album would hurt not only Columbia Records, but also Bruce Springsteen and The E Street Band, the AFM, and everyone else whose considerable time and efforts have gone into bringing this outstanding music to you.

The record industry and the broadcasters are quite dependent upon one another for the long term health of both of our businesses. Home taping off the air is a major problem facing the record companies, and one that broadcasters could play a substantial role in solving. I sincerely request your understanding and cooperation in this most important matter.

Thank you,

Kind regards,

Bruce Landau

October 3, 1980

The more things change, the more they stay the same: 25 years ago, the record industry bugaboo wasn't file sharing, but home taping.

While we're catching up with Charley, it's also a good time to mention a few other players who have made this magazine what it is over the past quarter-century. Erik Flannigan, Charley's first managing editor (who reviews the recent Japanese CD reissues in these pages), is living in Los Angeles and has recently become Vice President of Programming for America Online, overseeing Moviefone, AOL Music, AOL Radio, and AOL Television. And he's recently engaged (sorry, ladies). Jonathan Pont continues to be our man in NYC, where he's been a writer and editor for business publications for the past decade; JP hit an advance screening of the *BTR* material (with Thom Zimny in the house) for this issue's "In the News" and will be interviewing Zimny for our next issue. He's also a proofreader extraordinaire and one of the guys I've relied upon week-in and week-out for help, ideas, random mp3s, and prank phone calls. Longtime readers may remember some folks from our Seattle days: James Halada and his wife Toni are expecting their first baby any day now; Drew Whittemore has been touring with his band The Stares behind their fantastic first record, *Spine to Sea;* Lisa Pritchard, last I knew, was on her way to Alaska to be a veterinary technician. Lisa, tear yourself away from the horseys at some point and give us a call, wouldja?

From our years in DC, there's Curtis Cleland, another detail-oriented Bruce freak-like-us we still count on to give each issue the once-over before we go to press; Curtis recently moved back to New Jersey to open Creature Comforts Pet Care with his wife, Erin. If you're in Northern Somerset County or parts of Morris and Hunterdon counties and you've got a dog who needs walkin', we can vouch. Visit www.creaturecomfortspetcare.com.

Here in the office now, Andrew Massimino is celebrating his fifth anniversary with *Backstreets*, after I somehow managed to convince him to make the move with me from DC down to Chapel Hill. Maybe he thinks I'd be lost without him. He'd be right. And the "new guy," coming up on a year's worth of *Backstreets* service, is John Howie, Jr. (He also fronts the Two-Dollar Pistols, and he probably wouldn't want me to mention it, but if you've got even an ounce of honky-tonk in your blood, run don't walk to get their *Hands Up* CD.)

And me? The biggest news is that my wife Laura and I are expecting our first kid, a girl, on February 14. And she still managed to come to five *Devils & Dust* shows with me. Having Laura next to me during "Valentine's Day," a title that has never been as meaningful as it is now, had to be the tour highlight for me; though it's hard to beat reaching over and feeling that little girl actually kicking inside during "Long Time Comin'." For the record, she never kicked more than during those bullet-mic songs. Whether they were kicks of approval or annoyance we can't be sure—but if she takes after her mother, those were surely her favorite songs of the tour.

Special thanks to guys like Josh Jacobson, Bernie Ranellone, and Mark Stricherz, who have been *Backstreets* Contributors since long before my time and continue to provide invaluable support in countless ways. Photographers like Debbie Rothenberg, Rene van Diemen and John Cavanaugh have kept the pretty pictures coming. And we've been lucky to hang on to longtime contributors while our ranks continue to grow, adding new writers to our stable that we've come to count on more and more, like Robert Bader, Lisa Iannucci, Roderick Jones, Magnus Lauglo, Flynn McLean, Fred Mills, Glenn Radecki, and Caryn Rose. With more to come, I can only hope.

Finally, the biggest constant for the past 25 years has been our readership: passionate, critical, but always supportive. And *Backstreets* is an effort that couldn't exist without a great deal of support, not only through readers' input and submissions, but through subscriptions. Especially as we're cringing at the thought of this issue's printing bill, we hope you'll be sure to keep your subscription current—if your mailing label says X83 or X84, this is the last issue you're signed up for—or if you haven't already, please join the ranks of subscribers who support us directly.

We've expressed enough surprise in these pages over the years that *Backstreets* continues to be able to stick around. I think after a quarter-century we can't really be surprised any more—we can just be extremely grateful. Thanks for sharing the ride.

Finally, your DVD player is ready for...

Rock 'n' Roll Future's Storied Past

By Jonathan B. Pont

The 30th anniversary of *Born to Run* finds the album in the midst of a full-on celebration, and seemingly as well-promoted as it was on its release. Now, a deluxe set with definitive sound, packaging, and archival materials shows how the record came to life, first over the course of months in two New York studios, then in a couple hours on a London stage.

Few releases show musicians in the times that precede a record and immediately follow. The *Born to Run: 30th Anniversary Edition* box set does both. Two films, edited by Thom Zimny, capture the creation of Springsteen's make-or-break third album for Columbia Records (the DVD *Wings for Wheels: The Making of Born to Run)* and an explosive concert three months after the album's release (the DVD *Hammersmith Odeon, London '75).* The concert, Springsteen's first performance outside the U.S., marks the earliest complete concert he has released. A third disc presents *Born to Run* in its third domestic version on compact disc, newly remastered by Springsteen's longtime mastering guru Bob Ludwig.

As the November 15 release approached, the set's contents began appearing in a variety of media and venues. Newspapers and wire services ran stories, and an internet campaign included a clip of "Born to Run" on Amazon.com. The audio from the package's documentary, *Wings for Wheels*, appeared in a multi-segment podcast on Springsteen's official website. An 86-minute edit of the concert film and documentary played in theaters, bringing the E Street Band to the big screen for the first time since *No Nukes*.

SHAWN POOLE PHOTO

Gimme my hat back!

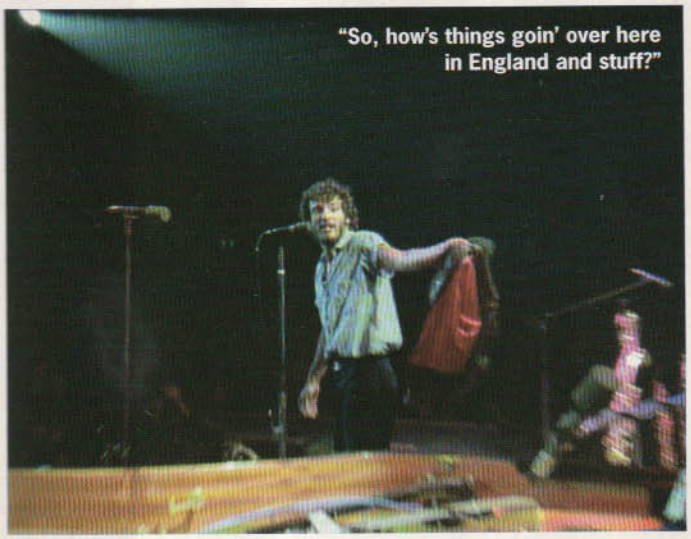
Promotion also brought Springsteen to other new venues, seemingly unconcerned about over-hyping this time out. He taped an interview with Terry Gross for NPR's *Fresh Air*, and another with Dave Marsh for *E Street Radio*, a new channel on Sirius Satellite Radio.

Springsteen has been front-and-center in the set's promotional campaign, not only because of the album's anniversary, but also because the reissue is significant. Though a CD of *Born to Run* was released as part of the Mastersound series in 1992, that version was not accompanied by historical documentation to put the album in any context. And Springsteen himself didn't seem to have much involvement in preparing the disc, much less in its marketing. This time, even though the project coincided with *Devils & Dust*, Springsteen made time to look thoroughly at what are likely the most crucial months in his career.

The project began in July, 2004, when a box arrived at Zimny's New York editing studio. The 16mm negatives of the Hammersmith concert, delivered to Zimny in rusting film cans, might have stayed in the vault for a lot longer than 30 years had Springsteen not grown curious about what he characterizes as a "blank spot" in the history of the E Street Band, namely an absence of released footage of the group's early years. In addition to the canisters with the Hammersmith film, the trove contained video from earlier performances, like the Central Park concert where Springsteen opened for Anne Murray in 1974. That remains unreleased, but a bonus feature adds three songs from even earlier in Springsteen's career, from the Ahmanson Theater in Los Angeles in 1973.

Zimny began by transferring the Hammersmith negatives to a high definition tape, explaining that the preservation of the images was a crucial first step because of the fragile condition of the film. Apparently, the reels had been stored in Springsteen's personal collection until the early '90s, after which they were transferred to a Sony vault.

Zimny worked extensively on the project for a year. One early challenge he faced: syncing the footage with the 24-track



"So, how's things goin' over here in England and stuff?"

audio portion of the concert. Though he had a copy of the relatively poor quality version of the Hammersmith concert that has long circulated in collector circles, much of the process was trial and error, with Zimny taking cues from what the musicians were doing in the film and trying to match that with the audio. He recalls speaking with Jon Landau about an initial viewing of two songs. "The footage was great," Zimny says, "but I couldn't tell Jon which song it was." Other tasks included color correction and digitally restoring individual frames.

Zimny makes good use of archived footage and outtakes from the recording sessions. For example, bits from the studio show up as the audio portion in the DVD menus for *Wings for Wheels*. Zimny adds other flourishes, like isolating the guitar solo in "Backstreets" from the Hammersmith show. Moreover, the documentary offers our first real glimpse into how the album was made. Barry Rebo shot video over a day-and-a-half at 914 Studios in 1975, and the footage takes viewers to the source, putting the documentary on its strongest historical footing. It's a coup for fans, and a surprise to collectors: Until *Wings for Wheels*, there was never even a suggestion of such video.

Still pictures, some of the best ever taken of Springsteen, appear throughout. Zimny, who edited *Live in New York City* and *Live in Barcelona*, had access to not only the materials Springsteen provided, but also to an array of photographs taken by Eric Meola and others. The intention in *Wings for Wheels*, however, was not a full airing of the archives. "The focus of the documentary was music and the passion in making the record," Zimny says.

The London '75 concert, the first of two at the Hammersmith Odeon, was filmed by *The Old Grey Whistle Test* producer Mike Appleton, with the intention of using a clip or two for the BBC program. Shot with four cameras, some footage found its way into various British television specials over the years.

Other concert films exist from 1975, but Zimny says the Hammersmith was the "best representation" of the band from that era. The two-hour, ten-minute film, shot November 18, 1975, gives viewers a sense that the E Street Band was going someplace. Springsteen hadn't watched any of it until recently, and in fact came away in 1975 with the impression that the show was lackluster. But the DVD must have done something to change his opinion. Though the E Street Band doesn't play with the intuitiveness they developed in time, they perform with raw power. The Hammersmith performance showcases an intensity that lives up to the legend Springsteen concerts gave rise to.

In the theater cut, there's no palpable sense of the struggle Springsteen had emerged from only a few months earlier, the perception of hype he sought to transcend, or anything else besides a young musician and his band, blowing through a fantastic set in front of a brand new audience.

BTR master class

Listening with Ludwig

By Douglas Bailey

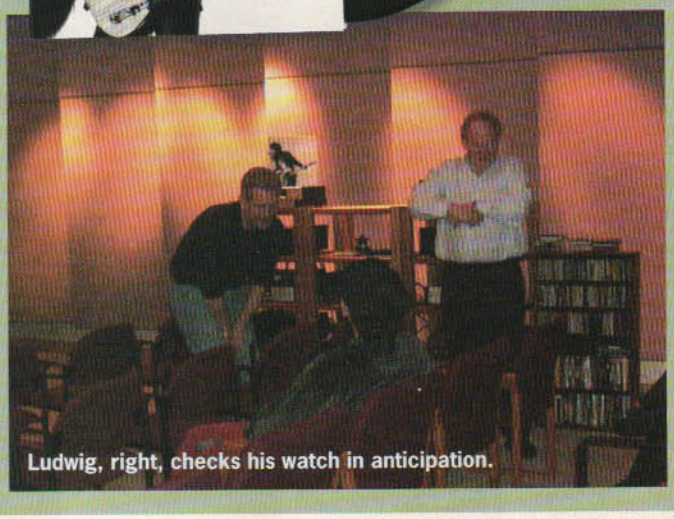
In the documentary *Wings for Wheels*, which accompanies the newly-released 30th Anniversary edition of *Born to Run*, Bruce says his composition technique at that pivotal period in his life reflected a "theatrical way of writing," a cinematic approach that built long introductions into many songs to signal that "something auspicious is about to happen."

Well, five lucky contest winners and their guests recently got the opportunity to sit theater-style for a sneak preview of the newly remastered *Born to Run* a week before its official release, soaking it all in as it played over a $300,000 reference quality audio/video system operated by none other than Bob Ludwig, the "manic compressor" himself, who has been mastering Springsteen's records since *Nebraska*. Something auspicious happened, all right. The unanimous verdict at the end of the special evening was the feeling that everyone was hearing the record for the first time—even though nearly everyone conceded they had probably worn out several copies of the original record, playing the album hundreds of times since 1975.

Ludwig, who does his thing out of Gateway Mastering Studio in Portland, Maine, graciously agreed to preside over the special listening and viewing and share his insight into how the project developed and reveal how he managed to coax new sounds and expressions from the 30-year-old original tape.

Nothing new has been added to the songs, he emphasized, but surely no one has heard the organ sound as clean as it is now at the end of "Jungleland," or the piano embellishments that were originally buried in "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out," or the phase shifting guitar in "Born to Run," and on and on.

The ultimate approval, Ludwig said, came from Bruce himself, who uncharacteristically didn't sit in on the remastering sessions. Even more uncharacteristically, Bruce proclaimed the remastered version perfect when he heard it (over his car



Ludwig, right, checks his watch in anticipation.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JIM PINFOLD / BULL MOOSE MUSIC

stereo) and didn't want to change a thing.

"I just went [pumping fist] *'yes!'* when he said he didn't want to change anything," Ludwig told the assembled winners, showing that he's not just a techno-whiz, but a real fan of Bruce's music.

The contest was the brainchild of Jim Pinfold, of Bull Moose Music, a Maine-based music store chain. Each contestant was asked to identify ten characters from Bruce's songs—only one of the five winners was able to do it without computer assistance. Five of the 40 correct entries were picked from a hat; those winners and their guests met up on a rainy night at Transparent Audio, in Saco, ME, to hear and see the new *BTR* package in Transparent's new state-of-the-art 13,000 cubic foot music and film studio, which is more like a high-tech isolation booth than a recording studio. It was designed to match Ludwig's Gateway Studio, the only copy of his engineering lair that he's allowed.

The host was as impressive as the setting, as Ludwig regaled the audience with his technical knowledge of remastering, as well as anecdotes about the more than 20-year relationship he has had working on Bruce's records.

"I could talk about what we did with *Nebraska* all night," he said at one point.

Although Sony says the landmark anniversary pressing marks the first time *Born to Run* has been remastered, Ludwig was quick to point out that it's actually the fourth time. He oversaw the original remastering for CD in 1984 and said the technology has advanced so much since then that the new edition sounds nothing like that 21-year-old CD, a point he demonstrated by playing snippets of both.

Ludwig likens his task to getting the absolute best out of a photograph from the original negative.

"Imagine if you had taken a nice picture and took it to Wal-Mart to have it developed," he said. "It might be nice, but it wouldn't look anything like it would if you took it to an artisan who could balance all the colors and get the skin tones just right. Then it's like something you could hang in a museum."

Of course, you have to have a trained set of ears. Ludwig says he can tell just by listening to the earlier versions of *BTR* where the CD was pressed—at the Sony plant in Japan, the one in New Jersey, or his favorite Southern California plant (since closed). If Lloyd's of London doesn't insure Ludwig's ears, they should.

Anyone could be forgiven if they didn't exactly understand what remastering is all about. Bruce, in the *Wings for Wheels* documentary, admits he felt the same way.

"The mastering thing was a mysterious and confusing element," he said, recalling the day he completed the album. "We simply didn't know what it was, what its purpose was or what it did. All I knew it was the last thing I was going to have to decide before the record came out and I was simply paralyzed."

For a minute there, Bruce and I thought about putting together a 5.1 surround sound version of *Born to Run*. But then we just looked at each other and said, 'Nah....'

—Bob Ludwig

But Ludwig says Bruce understands and appreciates the mastering process now.

"I think he learned more during the mastering of *Devils & Dust* than he has on any other record," Ludwig said. "He was here in Portland for two days working on that, and I took it further than I thought he would ever want to go, and he took it to an even more extreme place—a lot further than I would have gone. It was a great experience."

Asked to explain, Ludwig said 'All I'm Thinkin' About,' for example, had a much more laid-back feel to it before mastering.

The latest remastering of *Born to Run* took one full day, Ludwig said ("I can usually figure out where I want to go with a song in the first five minutes; the rest of the time is spent perfecting things"). He showed photos of the boxes the original analog tape came in—complete with the name "Bruce Springstein" *[sic]* under "artist" and with "Meeting Across the River" subtitled "The Heist" ("I doubt even Bruce has seen these in a long time," Ludwig said). The tapes also included outtakes and other versions that, sadly, aren't included on the new reissue but can be heard in part in the *Wings for Wheels* documentary.

The first thing Ludwig did with the original tape was bake it in an oven at low temperature, a process he says lures long-decayed lubricants out of the old tape. "You can't just throw it on a tape machine or it would snap," he said.

Then he set out to make the sound the absolute best it can possibly be.

Bruce fans won't be disappointed. The new disc is crystal clear, with the sound right in front of your face, exhibiting better than ever the "wall of sound" effect Bruce was shooting for. Ludwig said that, unlike some artists who want their old albums remastered with today's digital technology to sound like they were recorded yesterday, Bruce likes to retain the grittiness of the decades-old recordings while boosting the sonic range of each track.

"For a minute there, we thought about putting together a 5.1 surround sound version of *Born to Run*," he said. "But then we just looked at each other and said, 'Nah...'."

Demonstrating the difference from previous digital versions, Ludwig played each one without changing the volume or any other variables and each one got successively louder and richer, less muddy, with the latest version obviously the best of all. The horns on "Tenth Avenue" have never sounded fatter.

Perhaps even more impressive is the surround sound on the 1975 concert footage that also comes with the new *BTR* package.

"Bruce doesn't like to surround the listener with music from live concerts," Ludwig said. "He prefers that the music stay in front just as it would be if you were at the show. It might not make the ultimate use of surround technology, but it captures the true energy of the performance."

No one disagreed as the audience was treated to "Lost in the Flood," "For You," and "Detroit Medley" from the 1975 London concert, and a long-forgotten film of Bruce performing "Spirit in the Night" from an early 1973 concert in Los Angeles that is part of a bonus feature. While the restored film is still somewhat grainy with lots of artifacts, the sound—compliments of Ludwig and Bob Clearmountain—is breathtaking, with the audience applause and hoots clearly restricted to the side channels.

Several of the contest winners wanted to hear "Thundercrack" and "Wild Billy's Circus Story" that are also on the disc, but Pinfold warned the cuts were each about 20 minutes long.

"So?" someone asked.

Then Janey said it was time to go.... ➧

Doug Bailey is a former reporter and editor for the Boston Globe *who now works for a strategic communications company in Boston. He first saw Bruce perform live in December of 1975.*

Greetings from Hogwarts

Harry's Place

By Caryn Rose

If you hate Harry Potter, stop reading now. But if you're obsessed, this is the story: two brothers are bored. They write a bunch of punk rock songs about the Harry Potter books. They play a show as a joke, but then write more songs, enough for a record. They go on the road as Harry & the Potters, playing libraries, bookstores, and Potter festivals. What does this have to do with Bruce Springsteen? Well, Paul DeGeorge ("Harry, Age 7") is a massive Springsteen fanatic; his profile on the band's web site has three different Bruce lists (including "Top 3 Springsteen Songs That Mention Thunder"). *Backstreets* took a few moments to correspond with him while on their current nationwide tour. (Warning: Book Six spoilers ahead!)

What house at Hogwarts would the Sorting Hat put Bruce Springsteen into?

Springsteen is definitely in Gryffindor. It takes a lot of guts to put yourself out there, and courage is valued most highly in Gryffindor. He's hard-working too, but Hufflepuff is lame. I award one million points to Gryffindor for "Born to Run."

Which Springsteen song do you think Harry Potter would adopt as a theme song?

I know it's probably cliché at this point, but I'd go with "No Surrender" for Harry. The song works for him on both a literal and a thematic level. Harry has had some pretty crummy Defense Against the Dark Arts teachers, and he's taken that aspect of his education into his own hands and learned things for himself, outside of school. At the end of Book 6, he decides to drop out of school entirely and go after Voldemort. On a larger scale, Dumbledore tells Harry that "We must constantly fight, and even then evil can only be kept at bay, never eradicated." Harry's accepted that it's either going to be him or Voldemort, and he's not giving in. He's ready to keep fighting even to the death. Maybe John Kerry didn't have that commitment and that's why he lost.

Do you think Bruce is a Harry Potter fan?

My guess is that Bruce probably hasn't read the books, but I think he'd dig a few of them, particularly the later ones in the series. There are definitely a lot of themes in the books that parallel concepts Bruce has explored in his music. One of the overriding ideas in both the book and with the Boss is that you can't define a person by their environment. A person in defined by their actions, and both Bruce and Rowling recognize that there is tremendous potential in ordinary people. That's what's so uplifting and encouraging about the books and the music.

You've taken Felix Felicis and are walking down the street in Rumson, NJ. Suddenly, you see a familiar figure in a Dolphins cap ambling down the street towards you. What happens until the potion runs out?

Bruce and I would go get a nice pizza. Does Bruce eat pizza? If he doesn't want pizza I guess he can have some tempeh or something like that. After that, maybe we'd play some pinball. I would tell him to stop letting crappy Photoshop hacks do his album art. We would take his '57 Chevy over to some place with a good jukebox and then have some chocolate shakes and discuss how big his muscles were back when *Born in the U.S.A.* came out. Then we'd go find a time machine and go back to 1974 and watch an awesome Springsteen show, and he'd whisper audio commentary in my ear whole time.

Harry and the Potters' latest CD is entitled Voldemort Can't Stop the Rock. *You can find out more about them at http://www.eskimo-labs.com/hp/*

BRUCE TATMAN ILLUSTRATION

THE ON AIR

"Every artist's dream"

Sirius Creates All-Bruce Channel

By Lowell D. Kern

"It's every artist's dream. You turn on the radio and there's nothing but you on it." Bruce Springsteen seemed very pleased when he confessed this to the crowd at Continental Airlines Arena on November 17. E Street Radio launched on Sirius Satellite Radio on November 1, and as Springsteen alluded to, the channel features all Bruce, all the time.

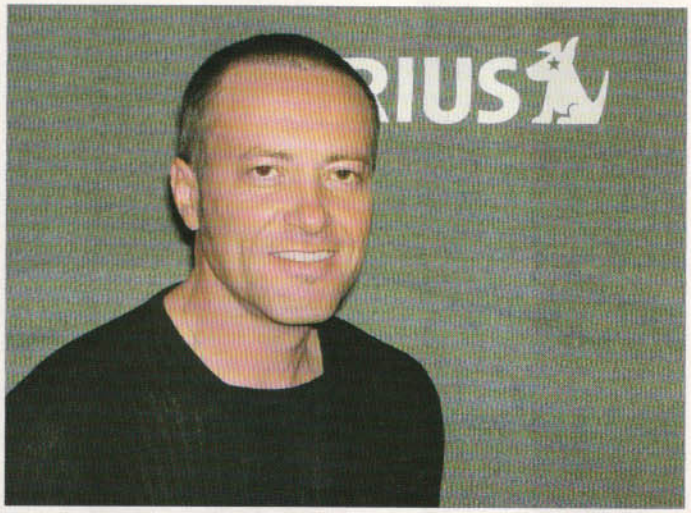
Scott Greenstein, President of Entertainment and Sports at Sirius conceived the idea. "Scott is the reason there's even a channel—it was his idea," Springsteen biographer Dave Marsh told *Backstreets*. Marsh, who has his own Sunday morning show on Sirius—"Kick Out the Jams with Dave Marsh"—said Greenstein is a huge Springsteen fan who he knows "more from backstage than anywhere else."

According to Marsh, Greenstein "thought it up and gave us a long leash to do it with, and put a ton of resources into it. He came up with the promotional campaign, he negotiated with Sony. He made it a big deal, and let everyone know it was a big deal to him."

Greenstein envisioned a channel that would cater to fans like himself. "We wanted to give listeners what they wouldn't get on terrestrial radio," Gregg Steele, Senior Director of Music Programming at Sirius said in a conversation with *Backstreets*. "Our most important audience is the hard-core fans."

Steele is responsible for the channel's programming. "We try to achieve a balance with the channel—mixing eras, tempo, released and rarer material." However, overall, Steele wants the music to speak for itself: "We're all about authenticity."

"As with terrestrial radio, programming a channel is a fluid process," says Steve Blatter, Senior Vice President of Music Programming at Sirius. Although Sirius uses a computer to help manage the database of music, "every hour is hand-massaged by Gregg," Blatter added. The play list is continually refined, based on listener response and what sounds right to Steele's ear. (Listeners can pass their suggestions along via the E Street Radio page on Sirius.com).



Behind the curtain: E Street Radio programmer Gregg Steele.

Marsh is impressed with the work done by the Sirius team. "Gregg and Steve [Blattner, as well as Steve Leeds, VP of Talent and Industry Affairs at Sirius] are also fans. They know their Bruce, and sometimes one of them will say something and I'll go, 'I didn't know that one.' At the same time, they're radio professionals."

Steele was originally working with a group of 129 unique songs. But just two days before the channel launched, Springsteen gave his approval to the idea of using the euphemistically described "fan-based" recordings, expanding the universe Steele had to work with to over 1,000 different versions of the songs in Springsteen's vast catalog.

The ability to use these unofficial live recordings is the basis for one of the most popular features on the channel, the "Live Thunder" concert series. Each night, a different concert is played in its entirety. The "Live Thunder" show played each Friday night is selected by fans from a list presented on the Backstreets.com website.

"After we got on the air," Marsh says, "mainly what I was was a cheerleader, especially for Gregg's programming decisions. To Gregg, we owe the selection of concerts and the concept of the fans picking one show per week."

Of course, the question is where this material came from. Die-hard fans will recognize some of the recordings, including titles released by Crystal Cat and a widely-traded compilation of songs from the ten-night stand at Madison Square Garden in 2000. But Steele is vague about his sources, saying only, "the music

DEBRA L. ROTHENBERG PHOTO

Marsh (right), here with Gary U.S. Bonds, Kicks Out the Jams on his own weekly Sirius show.

is out there." Some of it, Blatter said, was obtained from "friends of friends."

One of those "friends" is Marsh. "Once Bruce decided that we could use bootlegs or whatever we could find, I opened my vaults," he says. Marsh also conducted a legnthy, in-depth interview with Springsteen, as well as interviews with Springsteen manager Jon Landau and E Street Band members Steve Van Zandt (the host of two Sirius Radio shows himself), Roy Bittan, Danny Federici, and Garry Tallent. Conversations with Bob Ludwig, Springsteen's longtime mastering engineer, Davey Sancious and Patti Scialfa are planned. New York DJ Dennis Elsas conducted an interview with Clarence Clemons that has also been featured.

According to Marsh, while E Street Radio was still in the planning stages, "the focus sort of shifted from *Devils & Dust* to *Born to Run*." This "opened the door to quite a bit more thinking about [Bruce's] history, a good thing," Marsh opined.

In addition to live concerts and exclusive interviews, another staple of E Street Radio has been material that wouldn't ordinarily get public exposure. Unreleased takes of many album tracks have been featured, including alternate versions of every song off *Born to Run* (including a rare alternate take of "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out"). Unreleased versions of "Pink Cadillac" and "Empty Sky" have been played alongside familiar outtakes from *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, *The River* and *Born in the U.S.A.* E Street Radio has also featured at least one song, "Lonely Night in the Park" that was previously unheard by the vast majority of even the most dedicated Springsteen aficionados.

"The best thing has been the interviews and the previously uncirculated material," says Glenn Heath, a Springsteen fan and Sirius subscriber from Dallas. "Having Bruce music on an ongoing iPod-like rotation is great. You never know when you'll hear a song that you haven't listened to in years."

In addition to satisfying the fans, Steele's programming had a direct effect on the last few shows of the *Devils & Dust* tour. "As I've listened," Springsteen told a New Jersey audience while dedicating a song to Greenstein and the Sirius team, "I said, gee, there were so many things that I had no idea that I ever did."

Starting a week after the launch of E Street Radio, at the November 8 show in Philadelphia, Springsteen broke out the first of four songs that hadn't appeared in concert in 24 years or longer. The highlight of the November 8 show was the first performance of "Drive All Night" since June 1981. The November 9 show at the same venue dug even deeper, featuring two outtakes from *The Wild, The Innocent & the E Street Shuffle*—solo piano versions of "Thundercrack," (which had been played with a band at a number of holiday shows), and "Santa Ana," which hadn't been played in any form in 32 years. Both "Drive All Night" and "Thundercrack" appeared at every remaining show on the tour, and "Santa Ana" became part of the regular rotation.

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FROM ASBURY PARK TO E STREET RADIO
"Bruce Springsteen and SIRIUS Satellite Radio bring you E Street Radio, America's only 24/7 radio station devoted to the music and archives of Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band. Hear rare tracks, live fan-based recordings, interviews with members of the E Street Band and the definitive Bruce Springsteen interview with Dave Marsh done exclusively for E Street Radio."
E Street Radio on SIRIUS coincides with the 30th anniversary of the release of Springsteen's album Born To Run, which is being remastered and released as a 3 disc set for release on Columbia Records on November 15th.
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The rarities trend continued at the last two shows in Trenton on November 21 and 22, as Springsteen played two more songs that were last heard live when Richard Nixon was president. The show on the 21st featured five songs that were written in 1973 or earlier, including "Song for Orphans," an outtake from *Greetings from Asbury Park, NJ*. Closing night on the 22nd reprised "Song for Orphans" and included the first performance of "Zero and Blind Terry" since before the release of *Born to Run*.

"Bruce probably had forgotten about some of the songs that became jaw-dropping moments for the fans," said Heath. Marsh provided *Backstreets* with direct insight into Springsteen's feelings about the channel, commenting on Bruce's "genuine delight and enthusiasm and sense of discovery" of his older material. Looking ahead, Marsh hopes that "there is some seed germinating somewhere in his thought process that E Street Radio planted."

Recognizing who his listeners are, Steele is very cognizant about getting the details right. "Springsteen fans are a very knowledgeable group," he said. As far as Springsteen is concerned, Steele is up to the task. Talking about the Sirius team Springsteen quipped, "There's a lot of people over there that now know more about me than I know about myself. From now on if I have any questions about myself, I know who to call, I know where to go."

When Steele needs to confirm information, one place he has gone has been *Backstreets* magazine. "Chris [Phillips] has been really helpful with content."

"Sirius has been really open to input," said Phillips, the editor and publisher of *Backstreets*. "We've chimed in with suggestions here and there, in terms of what tracks they ought to look at. And we'll hook them up with a show here or there when it's needed. But the most involvement we've had has been as listeners."

E Street Radio was conceived as a three-month project to tie in with the release of the *Born to Run* 30th Anniversary package. There are no plans in the works for the channel to run past the end of January. However, acknowledging the response of its listeners, Sirius recently extended the life of its Rolling Stones station. Could E Street Radio be similarly extended? "If the fans want it, they should let us know," said Steele.

Lowell D. Kern is an entertainment and technology lawyer in New York City.

THE INTERVIEW

Because "The Night"

My Hometown Station

By Mike Black

Bruce Springsteen shocked listeners of Brookdale Community College's 90.5 The Night in Lincroft, NJ, with a surprise radio interview the day before a benefit show at Asbury Park's Paramount Theatre.

Jeff Raspe, music director for the station, conducted the October 3 interview, which was mostly a show of support by Springsteen for WBJB 90.5, the college's NPR member station. A relaxed, jovial Springsteen talked about NPR radio in general, and that he listens to 90.5 The Night every morning while taking his kids to school. He mentioned that it's always a fight for the radio dial during the morning commute, and his preference is Brookdale's station. The Night is well known for its support of local artists, and Bruce noted how much he enjoyed the station and its music. Bruce also played two songs, "All the Way Home" from *Devils & Dust*, and "If I Should Fall Behind" from *Lucky Town*.

Paging through a copy of the *Songs* book while he spoke, Bruce deflected questions about the upcoming 30th anniversary re-release of *Born to Run*, preferring to talk about supporting local radio, this during 90.5 The Night's fall membership drive.

Jeff Raspe: *90.5 The Night, Brookdale public radio, Jeff Raspe here with you; we actually have a special guest here this afternoon. This is day five, the final day of our fall membership drive. We have a lot of guests come here to 90.5 The Night; we generally try not to have it happen during a membership drive, because it leads to insane amounts of chaos, but I got a call earlier today, and I was told that you wanted to come over.*

Bruce Springsteen: Well, I heard somebody begging for money, and so I thought I should either come over and bring some, or at least bring my guitar and play a few songs. *[laughs]*

Springsteen and Raspe.

Bruce Springsteen has joined us at 90.5 The Night. Thank you very much for coming by this afternoon.

It's my pleasure.

There are plenty of reasons we could mention for why you are here; whether it's the benefit concert tomorrow night at the Paramount Theatre in Asbury Park for the Red Cross, or the impending re-release, remaster of Born to Run.

Actually, I'm here because I have the radio tuned to your station while I'm delivering my kids to school *[laughs]*, that's the primary reason. There's a battle for the radio dial in the morning, but we usually find something on The Night that we can agree on.

Well that's great to know!

It's a great playlist, and if you're a songwriter... I've heard a lot of music I hadn't heard, and it's a station that will send me out looking for records. That's a nice thing that doesn't happen that much—not to mention NPR and the news. So I'm glad to be here.

Thank you. It's always nice to know that artists out there are fans of public radio. Now I happen to know that your friend, Jesse Malin, who actually played a little earlier today, is a fan of public radio. He lives in New York City; we're not his local public radio station. We happen to be your public radio station...

That's right!

So that's a fun thing, and it's nice to know the artists and the songwriters, even some that we don't play, are fans of what we do here.

Radio playlists have gotten so tight, and it's nice to put something on where you're not sure what's coming up next, exactly.

And you did actually bring your guitar...

I did!

And you're willing to play a couple of songs for us?

I'll be glad to, yes.

So here at 90.5 The Night during our Fall membership drive, this is Bruce Springsteen...

[Springsteen performs "All the Way Home"]

Jeff Raspe here, with Bruce Springsteen, during our fall membership drive, and that is actually why Bruce decided to come over here... the value of public radio is something that is important to us; we've actually had him tell us that he's a listener. He's a regular listener. We're a preset on the car. So, you said you tend to find common ground with the kids while listening to 90.5 The Night.

Yeah, well, what I like is that there's a lot of great new rock and new songwriters, and from some of the older guys you play things that are a little unexpected, so its always fun. I think that's important—it's just a nice blend of music. My boy is 15, so he's been into music for the last year or two pretty intensely; he's got a lot of groups that he likes, and we're always in search for some common ground there.

That's actually one of the things, when the Vote for Change tour came up, I was wondering how Conor [Oberst]—Bright Eyes—ended up on the bill with you guys, and I think somebody told me that it might have been you...

Actually, Michael Stipe from R.E.M.—Conor was playing with him on a few dates, and I heard his records, I knew his records a little bit, and he was amazing. Just a real great songwriter, and a real powerful voice comes out of that little body! *[laughs]*

For years I've been playing Bright Eyes records on the radio, either here or the station where I used to be, and he was quite possibly a teenager when his first records were coming out. Personally, I think he still hasn't quite learned how to reign himself in. If it's coming out, it's coming out!

Yeah, you don't want to do that too soon *[laughs]*. You know, I go back to my first couple of records, and the thing that I like about those records, I recall them as being very unselfconscious. I'm not so sure that's actually how I was feeling at the time, but I recall them as being pretty "from the hip."

There's a certain kind of music you make when you're pretty sure that there's not a lot of people listening yet *[laughs]*. The minute you attract an audience, there's a formality to the dialogue, and you tend to be a little more conscious about what you're doing. I like to make a lot of different kinds of records so I can throw that off from time to time and not think much about it. The formality of presentation as you go along is something that allows you to reach an audience, but it's also something, if you're not careful, it can limit you. And what's great about his stuff is it feels very *free*.

If I go back to my first record, or even my second record, too, those records had a certain eccentricity and the musicianship was kind of crazy on it... you don't want to reign yourself in too soon.

KRISTIN FLORIO PHOTO

JEFF RASPE PHOTO

Or at all, for that matter. When you start worrying about, "Is this what people are expecting?" and "Should I do it that way?" that's a dangerous question to be asking yourself.

Yeah, and it's not even so much that, it's just I think there's a natural formality that... I wouldn't say creeps into your work, but it's something... I would point to *Born to Run* as the record where I intentionally wanted to bring in a certain sort of formality, I thought it was a way to streamline, and at that point make the music more powerful for me. But you never want to get stuck in it.

You know, the artist's job is, you paint yourself into a box, and then you're supposed to be Houdini—you're supposed to get out. And then you build another one, and you're supposed to escape from that one, and that's where the drama and the excitement is. And if the audience doesn't see you escaping, I think you lose interest, they lose interest, so you're always kind of painting this box and you're always trying to do a magic act and slip yourself out.

I think that's one of the great things that you've done, whether consciously or unconsciously in your career, is for the most part you've done things that people didn't expect. Even to the point—and I can see you're leafing through a book and you're kind of hanging around "Lucky Town"— when you put out two records at the same time, nobody had really done that at the time.

Actually, Guns N' Roses! *[laughs]* But that was just, we had the records, they were there, and so I put them out. It's funny, because the other night I was writing some new band material, so I went back and listened to some of them, and I said "Yeah, there might have been a couple of songs too many on this record." Sometimes those ten-song, twelve-song records where everything is really tight, they have a certain sort of impact that's nice. I don't know if I would put two out again, you know *[laughs]*. I did it that time because I had the music. The first one, it took me a long time to record *Human Touch,* and then *Lucky Town* I cut in three weeks, and so it was sort of a gift from the muse or something. And it had a lot of the stuff I really liked on it, too, those songs have really tended to last for me.

And sometimes you don't want to wait; because I'm sure somebody somewhere along the line said, '"Why don't you wait until we get this *record out, and then sometime next year..."*

Well, if you go back to the *Tracks* record, which is our record of outtakes, there was probably a situation where for almost every record we released, I didn't release one that I had. And later on when I went back I sort of felt bad about it. I said, "Geez, some of these records were pretty good." There was the record between *The River* and *Nebraska;* and there was the one that was in between *Born in the U.S.A.* and *Tunnel....* Even though we made a lot of them at the same time, I came up with an enormous amount of material in the studio. Sometimes looking back I said, "Gee, a lot of this stuff could have gotten released." But then you do worry about your work losing focus.

I was always very conscious of the dialogue I was having with my audience, and the things I wanted to say. And you're shaping your identity at that moment, too—I was young, I was still in my 20s, and you're very aware that people are still getting a handle on who you are, and I had an idea about what I wanted that to be. And so I tended to be very careful about certain things I wanted to say, and I wanted those things to be as clear as possible, so I released less. But it all gets out in the end, one way or another...

We find it all eventually...

But, yeah, some of those records could have come out in their immediate time.

Kind of in the same vein—you mentioned, very briefly, Born to Run, *and we shouldn't let this go by—at the end of the month* Born to Run...

I don't want to hype it *[laughs]*... I don't want to hype the whole thing, "First time in many years!..." *[laughs]*

The one thing I wanted to ask you about it: was it strange to go back and listen to it all again for the remaster and see all the footage? I'm presuming that you had a hand in all of those steps.

Oh yeah, sure, of course. It was fun. We filmed the band late—in the '90s, really, so the band had been together some 20 some years. I was kind of superstitious about it. But at the end of the *Rising* tour I said, "Well, gee, I wonder what's around that shows us, you know, when we were just trying to find ourselves?" I thought there would be a song or two here and there, and we went back and found quite a bit of... well, we found this one complete concert, which was really this very pivotal concert for us when we first went to Europe. I was 25, and it's just right at that moment. So it was interesting to see—plus, I hadn't seen it or heard it in probably 30 years or so, so we were like, "Hey, we were pretty good that night! *[laughs]* So that was nice.

Cool. Our guest this afternoon has been Bruce Springsteen, my name is Jeff Raspe, this is the fall membership drive here at 90.5 The Night, and Bruce was kind enough to come over and kick-start you to make a phone call, this last day of the drive.

Yeah, send your hard-earned cash in here to public radio.

Thanks a lot for coming by. You're going to play one more for us?

Yeah, I'd be glad to. *[performs "If I Should Fall Behind"]*

Mike Black is a teacher, writer and photographer covering the Jersey Shore. Jeff Raspe is the mid-day host and Music Director at WBJB-FM. Visit the radio station's website at www.90.5thenight.org.

Springsteen waves to his radio audience.

JEFF RASPE PHOTO

KRISTIN FLORIO PHOTO

NO DISC

The incredible shrinking LP sleeves

Sony Japan Sez: Let's Get Small

By Erik Flannigan

As we continue to wait for a proper domestic remastering campaign of Springsteen's catalog a la 2003's SACD upgrades of 15 Dylan albums, Sony Japan has given us the next best thing: mini-LP-sleeve reissues of every album from *Greetings From Asbury Park, N.J.* through *The Rising*.

Released in three waves in June, July and August, these 2005 compact discs are not remastered in the complete sense of a) utilizing the lowest generation tape sources; b) the best mastering equipment; and c) the most sympathetic engineer. (Bob Ludwig's work on *Greatest Hits* yielded what are arguably the best sounding versions of those 18 songs available and is the standard against which other remastering should be measured.) But collectively, these new CDs do bear a distinct sonic quality and sound different—some, not all; older albums more so than new ones—than previous issues. Taken as a whole, one might say the 2005 editions hit a bit harder, thump a bit deeper and in some cases are downright brash in their aural characteristics. In a word: punchy.

While they are not the sonic equals of Ludwig's work on *Greatest Hits* (a more accurate comparison would be to 2003's *Essential*), album for album, the new Japanese discs stand as the benchmark CD issues of Springsteen's catalog to date, even better than the 1999 Japanese mini-LP versions [see *Backstreets* #64]. Of course, not every album is a material improvement over current domestic CDs—we're talking about nerdy, audiophile nuances in many instances—but if you're still playing an early CD pressing of *Greetings, Nebraska, The River* or *Born in the U.S.A.*, do yourself a favor, as these albums sound markedly improved. The rest are at least as good as the current domestic discs. And we haven't even talked about the audacious packaging.

The attention to detail of this series borders on a disorder. Remember that small sticker on the shrink wrap of the *Live* box back in 1986? No? The one with four bullet points detailing its contents? Still not ringing a bell? Well, it's recreated in miniature here (to be applied as you see fit), and that's only the beginning.

The 1999 mini-LPs from Japan had brilliant touches (like resurrecting the original wraparound picture obi which adorned the first Japanese LP pressings of *Greetings*) but otherwise stuck to a consistent approach. Inside each mini-LP cover was a CD (made to look like a record, with the same typeface used across the series) and a booklet that reprinted graphical elements found in the original LPs, like lyric sheets, inner sleeves, etc., plus lyrics in Japanese and English.

The bar, gentle reader, has been raised. When they set out to recreate the original LPs this time, they really meant it—starting with the number of discs. Case in point: *Live/1975-85*. While it was first released as, and remains today, a three-CD set, the original vinyl pressing was five LPs, so the mini-LP recreation this time around is—you know it—five CDs. All five original picture inner sleeves are back, too, as is the original lyric book, joined (as in every album in the series) by a second Japanese and English lyric booklet with additional liner notes in Japanese. This second booklet, incredibly, goes one step further than the original, adding to the English lyrics transcriptions of every spoken word Springsteen utters on the album, including the long story for "The River," the band shout-outs in "Rosalita" and the intro to "This Land is Your Land." Setlists for the E Street Band's 1985 Japan shows are thrown in for good measure. Crazy, right?

Well, it only gets crazier. For albums dating from the post-LP era like *Live in New York City* that actually saw limited release on vinyl, the 2005 mini-LP recreation wants it both ways. *NYC* is a triple gatefold and recreates the vinyl-specific front and back covers (right down to another shrink-wrap sticker), but unlike *1975-85*, it sticks to two CDs, not three. Almost comically, though, the LP issue's three non-descript red inner sleeves are reproduced here, even without enough discs to fill them.

Other post-LP era albums like *The Rising* and *Greatest Hits* that were one CD but two LPs adhere to the LP "Sides" convention on their back covers ("Side One" through "Side Four") if not the discs (a special treatment only reserved for *Live/1975-85*). Even *Human Touch, Lucky Town* and *The Ghost of Tom Joad* read "Side One" and "Side Two" on their back covers. The CDs themselves abandon the "fake record" look of the '99 mini LPs in favor of either the disc art associated with that album (e.g. *Greatest Hits*) or something akin to the original Columbia LP label.

In all, these 2005 reissues are exquisite recreations, and for now they stand as the best way to experience the Springsteen catalog on CD. What follows are further observations about the sound quality and unique packaging elements found in each of the series' three waves.

First Wave

- *Greetings From Asbury Park, N.J.*
- *The Wild, the Innocent & the E Street Shuffle*
- *Born to Run*
- *Darkness on the Edge of Town*
- *The River* (two CDs)
- *Nebraska*

Greetings has been significantly upgraded over the years, and this version, like other recent ones, sounds a generation or two closer to the master tapes than early U.S. editions—though it is still not up to the sublime sound quality of *Wild & Innocent*. In a particularly inspired touch, the inner sleeve recreated for *Greetings* is the one found in first U.S. LPs that promoted other Columbia artists of the period (including Eric Andersen, Chicago and John Paul Hammond, not to mention a sign-up form for the future Springsteen collectible Playback sampler series).

On *Born to Run*, the low-level background hum at the start of "Thunder Road" is still present (presumably it was Ludwig who corrected this in the version found on *Greatest Hits* and *Essential*), as it is on all other versions of the album (hopefully the forthcoming Anniversary edition will rectify this). The gatefold carries a fitted obi that runs along the top edge on both sides of the sleeve to attractive effect.

Arguably most in need of remastering, *Darkness* sounds the same as ever; but it carries the sharp original picture obi (with a live shot from 1978) and reprints both the standalone original lyric sheet and the inner sleeve along with the new Japanese/English fold-out booklet. As for *The River*, Japanese CD pressings have always been the benchmark, and that holds true here; and like *Darkness*, the original lyric sheet and inner sleeves are back. As we noted in examining the previous Japanese reissue campaign, *Nebraska* is dramatically changed from early issues that were less hissy but more compressed. This latest edition might be the most wide-open yet. Sorry, no "My Father's House" coda.

Second Wave

- *Born in the U.S.A.*
- *Live 1975-85* (five CDs)
- *Tunnel of Love*
- *Human Touch*
- *Lucky Town*
- *In Concert: MTV Plugged*

Born in the U.S.A. is particularly strong, besting even the rare 20-bit Super Bit Mapping Japanese edition from the mid-'90s. Listen to the snare drum/trigger on "Dancing in the Dark," as it practically explodes from the speaker. This edition is much better than the original U.S. CD pressings and carries all the right sleeves and such inside. *Live/1975-85* is explored in detail above. *Tunnel* has its original obi restored and reads "Side One"/"Side Two" on the back, as do *Human Touch* and *Lucky Town*, which are the first discs in this series to deviate from the Columbia LP label look in favor of their original CD designs. *In Concert: MTV Plugged* has the oddity of reprinting the two original inner sleeves though it is only one CD. The "Limited Edition 1993 European Tour Double Album" sticker is on the front right where it should be. Yesssss!

Third Wave

- *Greatest Hits*
- *The Ghost of Tom Joad*
- *18 Tracks*
- *Live in New York City* (two CDs)
- *The Rising*

Greatest Hits is particularly well executed here a la *Born to Run*, with a gatefold sleeve (Bruce's handwritten liner notes span the inside) and an obi that hugs the top edge. The disc art itself mirrors the original CD pressing. *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, *18 Tracks*, and *The Rising* are straightforward (cover stickers for all three present and accounted for), though the latter pair has two inner sleeves each for their single CDs, again honoring the LP configurations. *NYC*'s bonus Japanese/English lyrics booklet again transcribes every spoken word on the set, notably the band introductions in "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out."

Back in the U.S.A....

Released commercially just five months after first airing on VH1, the *Storytellers* DVD reduces the original broadcast to little more than a teaser for the real thing. Vastly expanded and completely re-edited by Thom Zimny (who has had quite a busy year), the DVD is a far better representation of the April 4 performance and a unique glimpse into Springsteen's inner workings. As *Storytellers* dovetailed into the beginning of the *Devils & Dust* tour, it seemed at first that this intimate, story-filled night might be an early template, soon to be outdone as Springsteen took the show on the road. But while the talk-filled "Jesus Was an Only Son" was reprised nightly on tour, it soon became clear that *Storytellers*—with its singular tales, detailed song breakdowns, and a stunning "Thunder Road"—was a standalone event. The DVD also includes the Q&A session with the audience—in all, an essential document of a rare and candid Somerville-style master class.

With the great bounty of Springsteen releases this year—*Storytellers*, *Devils & Dust*, and the *Born to Run* 30th Anniversary box were all released within a seven-month span—came some concern, as copy protection issues became quite a boondoggle for Sony BMG. It came to light this fall that many of their recent titles were quietly installing "root kit" software onto PCs, a method of digital rights enforcement that left a customer's computer vulnerable to hackers. The copy protection, however, is *not* present on any Springsteen titles. A slowdown in production caused some scarcity of the *Born to Run* box in November, as the label was forced to recall and repress 52 other titles, but otherwise Springsteen releases were unaffected.

Some copies of the *Born to Run* box available at Best Buy include a bonus two-track CD single, recreating the original "Born to Run" b/w "Meeting Across the River" 7-inch, in a jacket that replicated the original generic Columbia sleeve and orange label. Not all Best Buy sets have the freebie, and geographical distribution was erratic; packages with the bonus CD are clearly marked "Best Buy Exclusive."

PBS aired a nine-song cut of the *Hammersmith* concert film as part of their pledge drive, and they have also been offering an exclusive CD as a pledge incentive. The CD, however, does not include any audio from Hammersmith; *Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band: PBS Exclusive* collects live material taken from other previously released recordings. There are seven tracks on this Columbia promotional disc—seven of the eight songs from *Born to Run*, in fact, omitting only "Meeting Across the River" (which has yet to see official live release). "She's the One" and "Born to Run" are from *Live in Barcelona;* "Thunder Road," "Spirit in the Night," and "Backstreets" from *Live/1975-85;* and "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out" and "Jungleland" from *Live in New York City.*

Another *BTR* promo CD will be harder to track down, but it's out there: *Bruce Springsteen: "The Story of Born to Run" Radio Special* is a one-hour radio documentary, culled from the box set's DVD content, distributed on CD by Columbia to radio stations.

—Christopher Phillips

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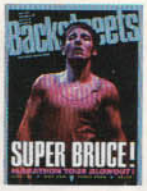

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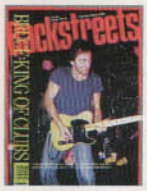

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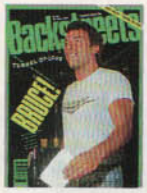

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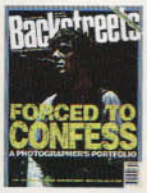

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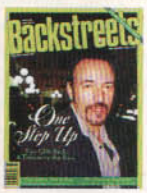

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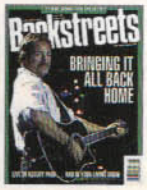

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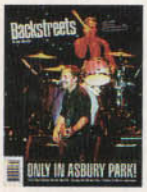

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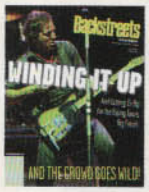

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ON LIPS

DEVIL'S NIGHT: Between *Devils & Dust* and the *Born to Run* 30th anniversary, it's been a high-profile year for Springsteen. He graced the covers of magazines like *Esquire* in the U.S., *Uncut* and *MOJO* in the U.K., and *Mucchio Selvaggio* in Italy; he also became friends with Terry (Gross, that is) when he appeared on NPR's *Fresh Air* for the first time on November 15, the release day for the *BTR* box. *D&D* had quite a showing in the Grammy nominations, getting nods for Best Contemporary Folk Album, Song of the Year, Best Rock Song, Best Solo Rock Vocal Performance, and Best Long Form Music Video (watch the Grammy Awards live on February 8). And taking it all on the road, Bruce got the honor for "top small venue tour" in the *Billboard* Roadwork Touring Awards. You'd think he might rest on his laurels for a little while, but already rumors of E Street activity for 2006 are heating up, with strong suggestions of a band album and tour in the planning stages (the Swedish newspaper *Expressen* even reports that two dates are being held for them at Gothenberg's Ullevi Stadium at the end of July). Back in May 2005, with the *D&D* tour just underway, Springsteen told Steve Morse in the *Boston Globe:* "I've got some band songs in my notebook right now, and eventually I'm going to start to demo them and we'll get together and play again.... I don't know if it's something I'm exactly going to be doing next, but I hope to be doing it sooner than later.". . . Whether or not a return to E Street is right around the corner, Springsteen seems to have committed himself to staying busy, as he was recently resigned by his longtime label, Columbia, for a multi-multi-million dollar deal (according to *Der Spiegel* (Germany), it was to the tune of $114 million; *The Times* (UK) reported $50 million). The contract renewal apparently stirred up some dust—Forbes.com reported that Sony-BMG chief exec Andrew Lack faced some harsh criticism over the deal, with the Bertelsmann AG side of the label "pushing for Sony Corp to sack Lack... Bertelsmann fears that Springsteen, who has been suffering from dwindling record sales, cannot with a new album bring in as much as Lack agreed to pay him." Maybe not—but here's hoping we get a shot at finding out soon.

WHERE THE BAND IS: Over on E Street, Little Steven has been busy in the effort to save CBGB; the club recently got a one-year extension and will remain open in its current location until Halloween 2006. A new book of photos from the legendary club, *CBGB and OMFUG : Thirty Years from the Home of Underground Rock,* features a shot of Bruce at the bar. . . . Little Steven's first two albums, *Men Without Women* and *Voice of America* (which had been out of print on CD), have recently been reissued by BGO Records in the U.K., together as a double-CD set. BGO has had Jersey Shore music fans in their sights lately, also issuing a remastered version of Southside Johnny's *Hearts of Stone* CD. . . . Speaking of the South, he's got a fresh one just out: *Into the Harbour* is his first new album with the Jukes in three years. More classic soul and R&B stylings, with a great cover of the Stones' "Happy" to kick it off. More details at his website, southsidejohnny.com. . . . Clarence Clemons, meanwhile, shared a Thanksgiving table with Dee Snider and Patty Smyth for a special that aired on VH1 Classic . . . . Check out the December 2005 issue of *Home Theater* magazine for a feature on Max Weinberg's mouth-watering personal screening room, which he inaugurated in 2004 with a *Godfather* marathon, of course.

PHISHING FOR COMPLIMENTS: Springsteen labelmate Trey Anastasio recently recorded a solo album with Brendan O'Brien; choice of producers aside, Trey and Bruce also have in common a post-band-breakup fan backlash, to which the Boss was able to speak. *Billboard* reports: "During a break from recording his first album since his band Phish called it quits, guitarist/vocalist Anastasio received some sage advice from Bruce Springsteen: 'As soon as you become celebrated for something, that's the point where it becomes crystallized,' the Boss said. 'And that's when you have to change.'" Clearly inspired by Springsteen for his album, *Shine,* Trey told the Associated Press: "The artists that I most admire maintain their relationship with their audience through all their changes. John Lennon being the number one example. Bruce Springsteen, anyone who had a long career.... I just saw Bruce's acoustic show, and I was just so impressed. I got to meet him backstage and talk to him for a while. He knew what was going on and he said, 'Man I'm so happy for you. Because it's tough when you're the guy who writes about cars and girls, and then all of a sudden you're not interested in cars and girls anymore.'". . . . Cowboy Junkies continue their Boss fixation with *two* of his songs on their new album, *Early 21st Century Blues:* "Brothers Under the Bridge" and "You're Missing.". . . From Italy, Miami & the Groovers cover "Further On (Up the Road)" on their *Dirty Roads* CD, which also has a guest spot from Joe D'Urso. . . . In January, *Nebraska* will be honored at the New York Guitar Festival 2006, with "The *Nebraska* Project" as the gala opening event. Artists including Laura Cantrell, Dan Zanes, Mark Eitzel, Michelle Shocked, Marc Ribot, and Lenny Kaye will be covering Springsteen's 1982 album from start to finish, at the World Financial Center Winter Garden in NYC on January 14. And it's free! . . . Lifelong Springsteen fans Lawrence Kirsch and Howard Bloom are collaborating on a forthcoming book, *For You,* due in 2006. They're looking for your Springsteen stories to be a part of the book—anecdotes, vignettes, special moments (whether good or regrettable). Visit foryoubruce.com and share your Bruce tales.

JAMES V. ROY / SCOTTYMOORE.NET

That's Alright, Backstreets: Scotty Moore takes a gander at his old friend Elvis in Backstreets #80.

DUST RADIO: On a sad note, November 20 saw the death of Chris Whitley from lung cancer, at only 45. I literally wore out my cassette copy of his debut, *Living With the Law* back in 1991. Bruce was obviously on that train, too, with "Big Sky Country" regularly heard at his concerts over the P.A. not only in 1992-'93, but on every one of his tours since (right up to *Devils & Dust,* when it appeared on his "walk-in" mix along with "Living with the Law"). Whitley's output that followed, which I kept up with every step of the way, was wildly (sometimes frustratingly) divergent, and frequently brilliant. The Hendrixian *Din of Ecstacy,* the all-stripped-down *Dirt Floor* (Whitley's *Nebraska?*), the loop-heavy electronica of *Rocket House* all demonstrated a Boss-like knack for avoiding ruts. (And kudos to Messenger Records for picking Whitley up when Sony dropped him.) If his lyrics were often obtuse, it seemed that was the only pretense this guy had; and just when you thought they didn't make 'em like that anymore, he was a rootsy singer-songwriter that my generation could be proud of. "When this is over, over and through / And all them changes have come and passed / I want to meet you in the big sky country...." And I'll hope you've got your National steel with you. Rest in peace.

—Christopher Phillips

Lopez unearths vintage Bruce songs

Aged to Perfection

By Magnus Lauglo

What with the *VH1 Storytellers* DVD, *Devils & Dust*, the instrument-juggling acoustic tour, and the *Born to Run* reissue, this has shaped up to be a truly memorable and multifaceted Bruce year. With so much going on, it would be easy to overlook a far less publicized, but nonetheless crucial event—the 2005 release of Steel Mill's *The Dead Sea Chronicles*.

Between 1969 and 1971 the original Steel Mill rocked the Jersey shore, also enjoying significant popularity in Richmond, VA. The band—including Springsteen and future E Streeters Vini Lopez, Danny Federici, and Steve Van Zandt, plus vocalist Robbin Thompson—turned down an offer for a record deal on the West Coast before Springsteen moved in new musical directions that ultimately led to the formation of the E Street Band. Fans of this obscure but fascinating long-haired phase of Springsteen's songwriting career have had to make do with hard-to-find and sub-par sounding bootlegs—until now.

For several years now, Steel Mill and E Street alumnus Lopez has been keeping that music alive with his own band, often billed as Steel Mill Retro. Back in 2001, Jersey shore rockers Boccigalupe and the Badboys asked Vini to join them onstage, and he suggested doing something a little less predictable than a standard set of rock 'n' roll covers. The idea of playing the old Steel Mill songs was born, and Lopez eventually went on to form his own band, which regards performing Steel Mill music as its main line of business.

Lopez tells *Backstreets*, "When we first started doing this I wasn't sure what to call it. We were going back in time, so I called it Steel Mill Retro. The name of my company is Steel Mill Retro LLC. But now I just call the band Steel Mill." Vini doesn't want the band to be regarded as a nostalgia trip. "This Steel Mill is happening now."

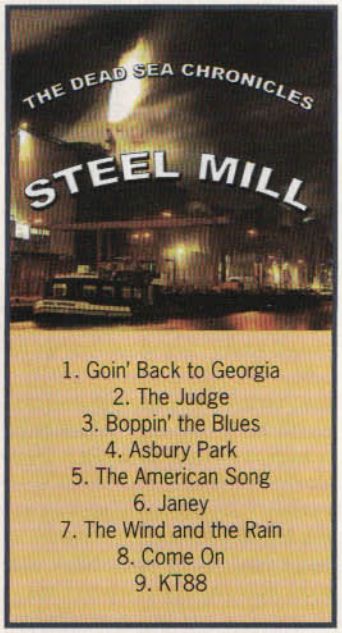
Bruce gave the project his blessing after meeting with Vini before a Giants Stadium show in 2003, but is not directly involved in any musical capacity. Yet the nine-track *The Dead Sea Chronicles* is far more essential to your collection than any other compilation of Bruce covers out there. With the exception of Robbin Thompson's cover of "Guilty", this is the first ever official release of *any* Springsteen compositions from the pre-E Street Band era.

Lopez, the only member from the original lineup, handles the vocals confidently from behind the drumkit. Rick DeSarno played guitar on the album (Bernie Brausewetter has taken over this slot in the live setting). John Luraschi on bass and Bill Kacerek on keyboards round out the line-up.

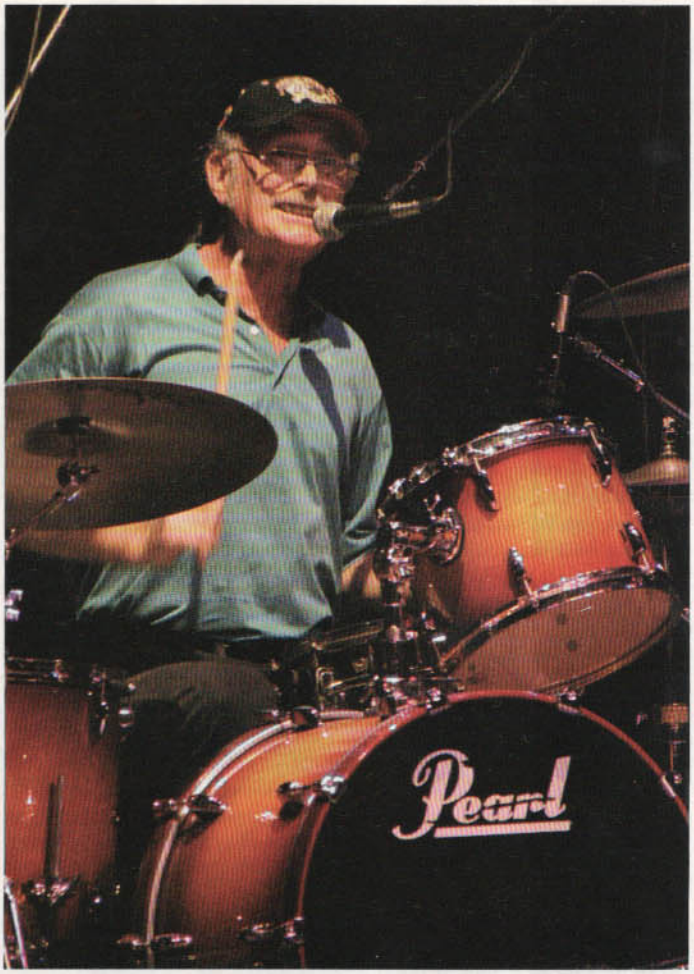
The Dead Sea Chronicles recreates the original Steel Mill sound: hard-driving, instrumental-oriented blues-rock, the prototype for what would turn into hard rock and heavy metal. They sound like the kind of band you might imagine opening for Black Sabbath—and once upon a time, in 1970, they did. In fact, the opening guitar attack of "The Wind and the Rain" sounds like it could have been lifted from any classic Sabbath album. The keyboard-and-guitar duel which highlights the instrumental "KT88" (KT88s were the expensive power tubes that the band used to use for its amps) recalls shades of Deep Purple.

Yet Steel Mill was anything but derivative. Springsteen's lyrics, even in his early 20s, stand out by their earnest reflections on love and mature observations on the politics of the day. Vini remembers songwriting from that period as a cooperative effort: "Bruce wrote all of the songs. We came up with the music." "Come On" suggests the influence of the counterculture on Springsteen's feelings about authority, youth community and rebellion. "American Song" (AKA "America under Fire"), written during the Vietnam war, demonstrates Bruce's engagement with controversial political issues from the very beginning of his career. This is serious songwriting and, intellectually speaking, miles ahead of most of *Greetings from Asbury Park, NJ*. Also included are two of Steel Mill's best known songs, "Goin' Back to Georgia" and "The Judge" (AKA "He's Guilty, Send That Boy to Jail"). On his use of "alternative" song titles Lopez comments, "People can call the songs what they want. The song titles I use are what we used in the old days."

Steel Mill performs dozens of original songs live, and for *The*



1. Goin' Back to Georgia
2. The Judge
3. Boppin' the Blues
4. Asbury Park
5. The American Song
6. Janey
7. The Wind and the Rain
8. Come On
9. KT88



JOHN CAVANAUGH PHOTO

Dead Sea Chronicles the band simply recorded the ones they felt most comfortable with. This isn't a one time-effort; Lopez says, "We now have more songs to record. We did the excavating, and there is more to come. Every time we practice we learn a new song."

Added to the eight Springsteen originals on the album is "Asbury Park," about the sad state of decay in the town which used to host such a vibrant musical scene. It was written almost 20 years ago by Steve Clark, an old friend of Vini's. Lopez helped out with the song, and unfortunately it remains topical today. The song's black humor, contemporary lyrics, and horns don't exactly help it blend in with the classic tunes, yet its inclusion provides a link between the nostalgic longing for Asbury Park's glory days, and the reality of its uncertain future.

Lopez explains that he chose the title for *The Dead Sea Chronicles* "because the music was hidden for decades below the rocks and mud, where it aged to perfection." For longtime Steel Mill fans, it may never quite dethrone some of the most cherished classic live recordings from the original band. However, stripped down to a more palatable length than the endless live jamming of old, and liberated from the confines of 30-year-old audience tape (which all too often completely obscures fascinating lyrics), some of the songs such as "Boppin' the Blues" shine better now than they did on bootleg.

Certainly, for those unfamiliar with Steel Mill's music, there couldn't be a better introduction than picking up *The Dead Sea Chronicles*—or catching a live show by the new incarnation. The band performs in the Jersey Shore area, but Vini would love to expand: "I really want to play in other places. We are exclusive but inexpensive. People have seen me down the shore for 40 years. I want to play where they haven't ever seen me before. I'd like to play this stuff all over the world."

Lopez also has plans to publish a book, *The First Beat from E Street*, by 2007.

Order The Dead Sea Chronicles *online at www.steelmillretro.com*

ON STAGE

A beautiful day in Philly

Okay, Bruce, Play the Blues!

By Ruth Barohn

A bit of "The Promised Land" sung by Bono near the end of "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" was the first hint of what was to come. At the conclusion of that song during U2's October 17 concert at the Wachovia Center in Philadelphia, PA, the crowd howled out "Broooce!" as if they all knew the Boss was in the building.

Springsteen, with a few nights off in the middle of the *Devils & Dust* tour, and wife Patti Scialfa were indeed in the house, seated at guitarist The Edge's side of the stage and ventured down to that side of U2's general admission ellipse. They were treated to a show full of new songs ("City of Blinding Lights," "Vertigo"), favorite hits ("I Will Follow," "Pride (In the Name of Love)," "Sunday Bloody Sunday," "One") and some rarities ("The Electric Co.," "Miss Sarajevo," "Fast Cars"). But Bono & Co. were not content to let Bruce and Patti just sit and watch.

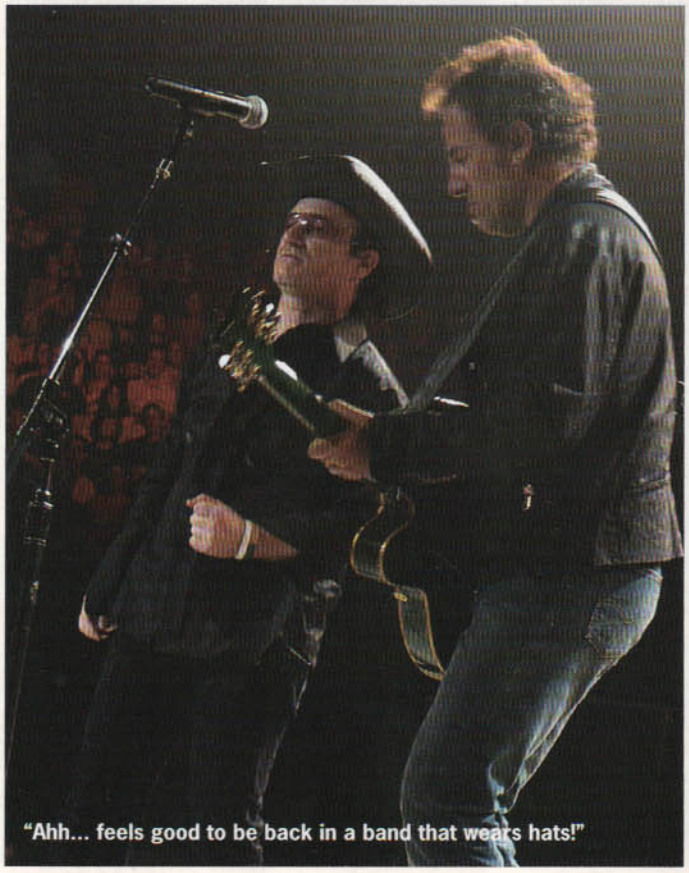
KRIS NOYES PHOTO

During the encore, Bono gave a shout-out to a fan with a "People Get Ready" banner in the crowd, adding, "But we need someone to play guitar!" Just then, Springsteen, brandishing Bono's custom Irish Falcon Gretsch, took to the Philadelphia stage to the crowd's roar.

While Springsteen played with the band earlier this year for their Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction, it was at a U2 concert in this city's JFK Stadium on September 25, 1987 that they first teamed up, for a rocking rendition of "Stand By Me." Tonight, it was "People Get Ready," a song familiar to both artists—U2 having covered it often, and Springsteen singing it at the end of "Land of Hope and Dreams" during his *Rising* tour.

This night's version was unique, however, as Bono had written some extra lyrics for the occasion. "'People get ready / 'Cause the Boss is in town" the U2 frontman sang, "He don't suffer no fools / Or kiss no clowns." Soon, Bono was singing, "You know the Boss / Has brought the wife" as he fetched Patti ("Beautiful girl from the Jersey Shore / With a voice like an angel / You know we love you some more") and the three traded verses. At the end of the jam, Springsteen took over to bring it to a close, and he had a new lyric of his own: "'People get ready, there's a train to Jersey...."

You did need a ticket, but you would not have been bored.



"Ahh... feels good to be back in a band that wears hats!"

THE BOOKS

Hot reads for the Bruce cognoscenti

Bookstore of Dreams

RUNAWAY AMERICAN DREAM: LISTENING TO BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN
By Jimmy Guterman
(Da Capo Press, 246 pp.)

By Marya Morris

Eskimos have eight words for snow. In *Runaway American Dream*, Jimmy Guterman offers up at least that many names for serious Bruce fans: "obsessives," "crazies," "Bruce nuts," "the cognoscenti," "knowledgeable ones," "those who think they know better," and on and on. *(Psst!* Jimmy! It takes one to know one. You, too, spotted the error in the *Essential Bruce Springsteen* liner notes regarding Patti Scialfa's and Nils Lofgren's backing vocals on "Trapped.")

Guterman says at the outset that this is not "a book that only obsessive fans can appreciate." That might be wishful thinking on his part for a broader audience, but nonetheless, the book is an absolute treat for music fans who've spent any amount of time debating Springsteen's choices of tracks on official releases or parsing lyrics to discern meanings, metaphors, or messages that could give us a deeper sense of how he creates his art.

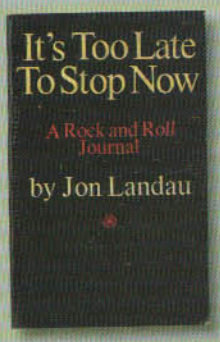
Moving in roughly chronological order from *Greetings from Asbury Park, N.J.* to *The Rising* (*Devils & Dust* was released shortly after the book went to press and is only mentioned in the introduction), Guterman explores the themes of the records, the unique stamp each made on Springsteen's career, and the ways his audience perceived and embraced (or didn't) the work over time. He makes astute comparisons between the stories, characters, instrumentation, and musical choices of each album to give the reader fresh ways to look at the old and new material. "If *The Wild, the Innocent, & the E Street Shuffle* is about place," he writes, "*Born to Run* is an album about time." And "where *Tunnel of Love* ('87) and the '92 pair of *Human Touch*/*Lucky Town* are records about the ravages of time, *Born to Run* . . . is about the promise of time, anticipation of what may wait ahead rather than regret about what's in the rear-view mirror."

Regarding the early years, Guterman makes the obligatory mention of Springsteen having been identified as yet another "next Bob Dylan." But where other authors have left it at that, Guterman asserts that although the lyrics to a song like "Blinded by the Light" were "high-quality Dylan," the music was—by design—*anything* but Dylanesque. "What Springsteen got from Dylan was more of an invitation to go deep into his own imagination than merely borrowing a subset of Dylan's imagination."

Guterman also traces the highs and not-so-highs of Springsteen's performance career. He describes as only an obsessive fan can the exhilaration of seeing the band and Springsteen perform at their peak power. Beginning with the Main Point shows in Bryn Mawr, PA in 1973 where "his forward-looking set was the sound of a band coming together" through the emotional reworking of "Blood Brothers" lyrics at the close of the Reunion tour on July 1, 2000, at Madison Square Garden, and finally to the sense of shared purpose among performers and the audience on the Vote for Change tour in October 2004, Guterman marks the shows and special appearances that sealed Springsteen's position as one of rock's best if not *the* best live act of all time.

In the chapter, "Hollywood," Guterman unloads his harshest criticism on the *Human Touch*/*Lucky Town* albums. He assails the "shiny" sound and "generic" lyrics of *Human Touch*, calling them "genre exercises, not full-grown, organic songs." *Lucky Town* gets off a little easier—Guterman concedes that it has its moments—but in the end it is hampered by "its musical sameness and lack of a great drummer." The '92-'93 touring band gets slammed as well. Clearly Guterman's disappointment in Springsteen's choices during that era hasn't diminished: "[T]here was nothing necessarily wrong

Not Too Late: An Afterword



One of the failures of *Runaway American Dream* is that I didn't reread Jon Landau's *It's Too Late to Stop Now* while I was researching it. If I had Landau's collection of late-'60s/early-'70s essays fresh in my mind, I would have been able to explore how the records he has made with Springsteen have taken some of his theories and feelings about rock 'n' roll and put them into practice.

Jon Landau was the Bruce Springsteen of rock critics: smart and diverse tastes, deep emotional commitment to his material, intent on sharing his excitement with anyone who'll listen. *It's Too Late to Stop Now: A Rock and Roll Journal*, published in 1972, is a collection of most of his best essays. He combines personal and aesthetic judgments with ease and style, and what comes through most loud and clear is the guy's ambition. In the best of these essays (particularly the one that gives the collection a title and "Confessions of an Aging Rock Critic"), he attempts to take everything he knows and share it through the prism of the rock 'n' roll he loves and understands deeply. Music fans should be grateful he switched jobs in 1975, and we're lucky to have him as a practitioner—but his voice as an observer with authority and wit is greatly missed. His big-picture predictions about what rock 'n' roll in the '70s would be like turned out to be true (with *The Pretender* and *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, he helped make his own predictions come true), his dissections of how he saw the Rolling Stones peaking are surprising—especially since *Exile on Main Street* was still in progress, and his essay on Aretha Franklin and King Curtis's Fillmore West extravaganza is a lovely as anything written about soul this side of Peter Guralnick. His most piercing comments are directed toward Bob Dylan: he writes that *Self-Portrait* "will be one of the most bought and least played records of recent years," and his reading of *Blonde on Blonde* will reveal something new even to those of us who've heard the record too many times. And anyone who writes a sentence that includes "The Doors" and "dead end" deserves acclaim.

Landau wrote with a personal voice. He was unafraid of first person, and his work drew power from personal experience. His most famous piece, of course, wasn't written until 1974 and is not included in the book. It's his review of a Springsteen performance at the Harvard Square Theater in Cambridge, the one that included the (in)famous line not worth repeating here. That essay ends with some of the most telling, beautiful, and instructive lines ever written about any kind of criticism: "As long as I write about rock, my mission is to tell a stranger about it—just as long as I remember that I'm the stranger I'm writing for." If you can surprise yourself, you might just surprise your audience. It's the mission for any writer, in any field.

—Jimmy Guterman

with touring alongside unfamiliar musicians... But it's a fool's errand to take a bunch of second-tier talents, ask 'em to pretend to be E Streeters, and expect them to perform anything new or worthwhile."

Guterman tackles several sensitive subjects that other authors have overlooked or avoided. (Granted, they're topics that have been fodder in the online fan forums for a long time.) He so vividly describes the vibe in the crowd at the Stone Pony on a night when Bruce is rumored to be showing up that readers will cringe in sympathy for any band that plays the Jersey Shore circuit —past, present, or future— watching from the stage as the venue empties out mid-set when word filters through the crowd that "He" won't be making an appearance that night.

More pointedly, the author assesses but does not lament Clarence Clemons' diminishing role in the E Street Band, both in the studio and on stage. Guterman sees Clemons as serving a "nostalgic function to the E Street audience," which greets each of his solos with "Pavlovian roars." That said, more than any other writer on Springsteen, Guterman offers high and thoughtful praise to E Street Band members for their contribution to the records and the live performances. In describing *The Rising* tour's iteration of "Born in the U.S.A.," he recalls "Tallent's sliding bass lines and a fierce duel between Springsteen's guitar and Max Weinberg's drums that extended and extended, like a bungee cord getting pulled until tension seemed to capture unlimited power."

As Guterman says upfront, "This isn't a 'How Bruce changed my life' book." He's right. It's better. It's an insightful, unvarnished, comprehensive, and fun-to-read account of 30-plus years of Springsteen and his music.

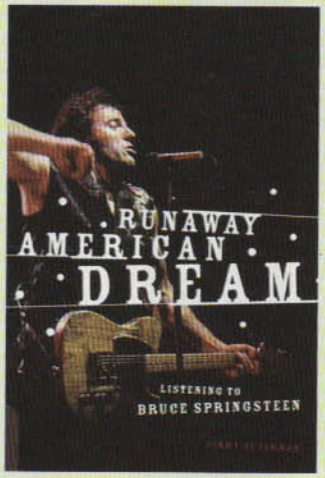
Marya Morris is a city planner from Chicago. She works for a not-for-profit think tank conducting research on planning, urban design, and transportation. Recently, she presented "From My Hometown to This Hard Land: The Visual Imagery of Cities, Suburbs, and Rural America in the Lyrics of Bruce Springsteen" at September's Glory Days Symposium.

"From telephoto to wide-angle"

An excerpt from Runaway American Dream, *by Jimmy Guterman. Reprinted with permission.*

"Born to Run" showed that Springsteen could take all the twists and turns of showstoppers like "Rosalita," "Thundercrack," and "Kitty's Back" and compress them into a taut song that didn't take ten minutes to lay out its whole story. Anything old-timers might say was lost in extended improvisation was gained in direct communication. And how much improvisation is there room for in a four-and-one-half minute rock'n'roll anthem? There were enough musical changes and surprises in "Born to Run" to fill a much longer song—false endings, saxophone and guitar fighting to solo at the same time—but they did it in a compressed context. It was, as Sam Phillips might say, "a pop song now," conceding nothing in its quest to hit the big time.

"Born to Run" is as open as Springsteen's intentions. Because some rock 'n' roll songs capture the universal, at first Springsteen was worried that he had inadvertently stolen the song. Keith Richards has said the same thing happened to him after he came up with the riff that powers "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction." While original, "Born to Run" does have antecedents in Springsteen's catalogue. It's another "pulling out of here to win" piece, an optimistic composition and performance that nonetheless deploys the word *suicide* twice in its first verse. There is plenty of unhappiness to overcome in the song, but it's overtaken by the promise of doing something about it. The characters battle the tedium of day jobs by riding "mansions of glory" at night and promising themselves a richer future somewhere else: "we'll run till we drop, baby we'll never go back"; "we're gonna get to that place where we really wanna go and we'll walk in the sun." There's no evidence that any of these good things will actually happen; there's overwhelming evidence that the singer believes they will and that belief is contagious. Only once does the singer "fess up" and wonder whether what he is looking for exists.



To these ears, the line of "Born to Run" that says the most about what the rest of Springsteen's career will encompass is its very first: "In the days we sweat it out on the street of a runaway American dream."

Dave Marsh, among others, has suggested that the line "I wanna know if love is real" is the key to understanding Springsteen's career, that Springsteen's songs document the bottomless vagaries of that quest. In *Glory Days*, Marsh also gets Springsteen to agree with him, so it's hard to argue. But argue I will. To these ears, the line of "Born to Run" that says the most about what the rest of Springsteen's career will encompass is its very first: "In the day we sweat it out on the street of a runaway American dream." It's all there, folks. It has the split between the mundane day and the limitless night, the inevitability of work, and the desire for community. (It's "*we* sweat it out," not "*I* sweat it out.") Those last three words—*runaway American dream*—encapsulate both the optimism (the existence of an agreed-upon American dream toward which Springsteen's protagonists hope to run) and the less pleasant reality of a dream gone awry, gone missing, gone out of control. You have to live with both sides. What has run away is an "American dream," not an "Asbury dream." After two albums emphasizing the down home, Springsteen's lens has changed from telephoto to wide-angle. The "highway 9" referenced in the song could be anywhere, not necessarily one particular north-south Jersey shore route. It was located, he hoped, wherever you are.

Springsteen is thinking big throughout the record, gaining power by invoking the big guns. "Born to Run" may have sprung from his brain alone, but "She's the One" invokes the primordial Bo Diddley beat and "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out" evokes the classic soul rhythms of Al Jackson and Duck Dunn. Although the spirit of the rhythm section of Booker T's MGs hangs over the song, "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out" is more notable for the role two E Street Band members play on it. Although it pretends to tell another story of how Clarence "Big Man" Clemons joined the band, in fact it documents the arrival of another band member, guitarist Steve Van Zandt, who joined during the recording of the album, contributing an occasional background vocal and salvaging the horn arrangement to "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out," singing the individual horn parts to the session players (including the highly regarded Brecker brothers) until the parts swung. Along with the three session horn players on that song was E Streeter Clemons, and "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out" was where the myth of the Big Man began.

Coming Up: More From Marsh

In addition to Danny Federici's forthcoming My Life on E Street *(see page 34), the new year will also bring a new Springsteen book from* ***Dave Marsh.*** *Of course, Marsh has a few significant Bruce tomes under his belt already, namely his* Born to Run *and* Glory Days *biographies, which were recently joined under the title* Two Hearts. *Rather than being a continuation of that story, his new one will focus on a very specific aspect of Bruce's career: the live experience. In* Bruce Springsteen: On Tour, *to be published in 2006 by Wenner Books, the author's text will accompany concert photography for a full-color, tour-by-tour history of Springsteen on stage. We asked Dave for an advance look into what his new book will be about.*

JOHN CAVANAUGH PHOTO

Marsh delivers the keynote address at September's Glory Days symposium

I figure any time someone offers to pay me to spend my time listening to Bruce and thinking about what it means and trying to figure out why it still gets me so goddamned excited, I should have a really, really good reason if I choose not to take that job. I had tears in my eyes at the end of the Hammersmith excerpts shown at Monmouth [at the Glory Days Symposium in September]—I'm no different than any other Bruce fan in that respect.

What in the world made me think I had something else to say? It was right about the time that *Devils & Dust* came out, and that was right after all the Dylan dust-up with Christopher Ricks. I said to myself, "Dave, you let the Proper Intellectuals interpret this stuff, you're going to live out your old age in a world where people think it all had more to do with Philip Roth and Raymond Carver than Peter Wolf and Sam Moore, and that is not acceptable. If you wrote something about Bruce live, you could push the songwriting aside, in order to get things in proportion, and you could bring forth that he does it with a guitar and a microphone and kneepads (we can't figure he does those slides across the front of the stage with nothing more to protect him than denim, can we?), not a bloody word processor.

"And get to see all those newly discovered pictures of Dr. Zoom *first.*"

Not that I know for sure that there *are* any rare Dr. Zoom pictures out there. (I should start a rumor that Bruce made "Electric Nebraska" by reforming The Sonic Boom.) Hell of a lot of people out there thinking that you could just read *Songs* and it'd be the same as going to the shows, though.

And the glory of it is, that's a great way to celebrate what Bruce has done, which is what photo books of this kind are best at, I think. (I've done two texts for photo books of which I am proud: My Elvis book from '81 or whenever it was, and *Forever Young*, based on Douglas Gilbert's 1964 [Bob Dylan] photographs, which comes out this month [October '05].)

Anyway, in the midst of this whole fake "crisis" of the music industry about recorded music, what's seemed more and more interesting to me is that music is not a thing but an activity. Its real life is onstage, where the musicians do it but, when it's right, so does everybody in the audience.

So it's about... Bruce is a verb. Active verb. Very, very active verb.

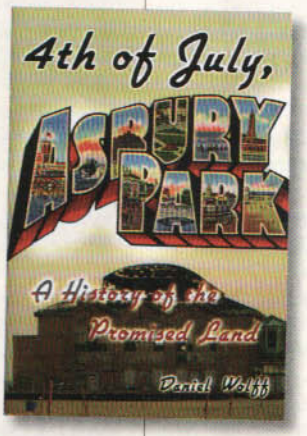
Casing the Promised Land

Under the boardwalk—and beyond

4TH OF JULY, ASBURY PARK: A HISTORY OF THE PROMISED LAND
By Daniel Wolff
(Bloomsbury USA, 280 pp.)

By Lisa Iannucci

Asbury Park, New Jersey is a town that, though forever linked inextricably with its most famous protégé, Bruce Springsteen, is also, sadly, similarly linked with America's history of racial intolerance. In his penetrating examination of the blighted Jersey Shore town, Daniel Wolff shows us the truth about our country's economic and social abandonment of its inner cities, and it is not a pretty picture.



Founded as a resort community in 1870, Asbury was from the beginning a city that, in its endless quest for pleasure, chose to ignore the concerns of the very inhabitants without whom the city could not function—the servants and laborers of the working class—and in so doing, charted its own course toward self-destruction. It was a city that produced nothing, that sought to attract visitors and residents based solely upon its ability to manufacture fun and frolic, and when more attractive options became available elsewhere for those who could afford it, Asbury became a dumping ground for the infirm and the powerless.

Wolff chronicles in painstaking detail the history of a city that began its life with great expectations, but that repeatedly fell victim to urban decay, shady deals, greed and racism, and more importantly, to an inability to deal with chronic housing and job shortages that over time decimated the city's population and left it ever more vulnerable to predatory real estate moguls looking to make a quick buck. It is a pattern that repeats itself over the course of the book; each time, one hopes that things will turn for the better, but they never do.

Ironically, it was this pattern of economic misfortune that allowed Asbury's underground music scene to flourish in places like the Upstage and the Student Prince. Wolff gives us fascinating first-hand accounts from E Streeters Garry Tallent and David Sancious, both of whom spent formative years in the area, and there are startling reminders there of just how tense and frightening the racial situation was as recently as 30 years ago. In Asbury Park in 1970, there was a "black side" and "white side" of the tracks, and you just didn't cross those boundaries often if you valued your life—even if, like them, you were a musician. Fortunately, things were different within the safe confines of the Upstage, where the only thing that mattered was the music. Though Springsteen fans will most likely have already read about this famous musicians' hangout above the Thom McAn shoe store on Cookman Avenue, Wolff's depiction of the club as a musical nirvana is especially poignant given the chaotic urban nightmare that was transpiring around it.

If there is a shortcoming to be found with this engrossing and enlightening book, it is that it contains scant discussion of some of the (mostly positive) developments of the more recent past; those who flocked to Asbury the week of Bruce's 2002 *Today Show* taping, for example, will not find a recounting of those festivities here, nor will they find more than a brief history of the sad demise of the Palace and (successful) efforts to save its iconic Tillie image. Change is indeed

afoot in Asbury Park—construction is currently underway on at least two major waterfront area projects, and with the recent movement toward the creation of an arts district and the opening of several new restaurants, shops and night spots, it appears that Asbury Park may finally be enjoying a long-awaited renaissance, though only time will tell if the seeds of change will truly take root.

With Hurricane Katrina shining a spotlight on America's seeming tolerance of the poverty, homelessness, and despair that exist at its very doorstep, it is, perhaps, inevitable that comparisons will be made between Asbury Park and New Orleans. Though there are more than a few obvious differences, the overall picture is startlingly similar: both cities are tormented by the chronically high unemployment and inadequate social services endemic to the (mostly African-American) urban poor; both have fallen victim to the same sense of myopia that allows us to look at these things and not see them, or worse, to see them and pretend that they ought not to concern us.

The story of *4th of July, Asbury Park* is the story of America in microcosm, and the tale it tells about the mistakes of our past, and just how much work is yet left undone is timely and frightening—it is difficult to read Wolff's excellent work without concluding that we as a country have so far failed to adequately address the issues of race, class and economic injustice, and as a result, we are just as surely doomed to repeat those mistakes.

Hey Eddie, can you lend us some inspiration?

A new story collection imagines what happens across the river

MEETING ACROSS THE RIVER: STORIES INSPIRED BY THE HAUNTING BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN SONG
Edited by Jessica Kaye and Richard J. Brewer
(Bloomsbury USA, 206 pp.)

By Roderick Jones

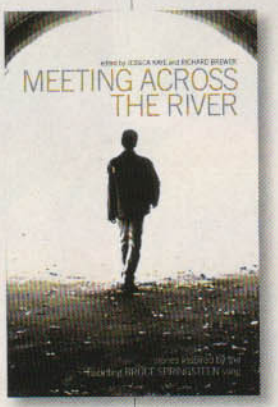
You sit down with the lights off after everyone's asleep, slip on your headphones, and play the seventh track on *Born to Run*. You've heard "Meeting Across the River" more times than you can count, but tonight you really concentrate on the lyrics and lose yourself in the melancholy trumpet fills. A scene spreads out on your imagination, and you eavesdrop on this conversation between a guy and his pal as though it's taking place outside your window on the street below.

There's tension and anticipation building... and then it ends without any resolution. You're into the strings of "Jungleland" before you realize that, in the song you just listened to, nothing happens.

The same cannot be said of *Meeting Across the River*. In this new anthology of short fiction edited by Jessica Kaye and Richard J. Brewer, the stories pick up where the song ends, and a whole heckuva lot happens. Most of it involves guns.

None of the 20 authors who contributed their variations on Springsteen's theme are household names, but several have won recognition for previous works in the crime and mystery fiction genres. This helps explain why—whether the story takes place south of the border, in a prison courtyard, or during the bootlegging 1930s—more often than not, blood is shed.

Each of the stories is short enough to read in one sitting. With their emphasis on plot, quirky characters, and noir settings, many of the stories seem as though they could easily be converted into comic books or Quentin Tarantino movies. Two stories even have the same climactic twist; the main difference between them is that the item taken across the river in one case is a truck full of contraband, and in the other is an orb filled with "aerosol-infectious Ebola-smallpox." (Yeah, Ebola-smallpox. What? You mean that you aren't thinking about Ebola-smallpox while you sit in the dark listening to the song?)



A few of the authors poke fun at their characters (or perhaps at the task of writing a story based on a song). Pam Houston's "Cherry Looks Back," distinguishes itself at the outset by being from Cherry's perspective, going on to depict a Jersey girl who is part caricature, part heart-and-soul. Cherry's boyfriend pulling up to her parent's house with "Thunder Road" blasting from the car stereo, charging up the stairs to commit a bizarre act of vandalism, then with bleeding hands, declaring, "This is your last chance," is the book's most memorable scene. In Peter David's "Killing Time by the River Styx", the narrator and Eddie are trying to catch a ride with Charon, the boatman of the underworld in Greek mythology.

A Springsteen fan's reading of *Meeting Across the River* will be fueled by the desire to find those same characters that inhabit her imagination while the song is playing. For me, they showed up three-quarters of the way through the book, in "Bobby the Prop Buys In," by David Corbett. At 21 pages, it's the longest story, and also the most engaging.

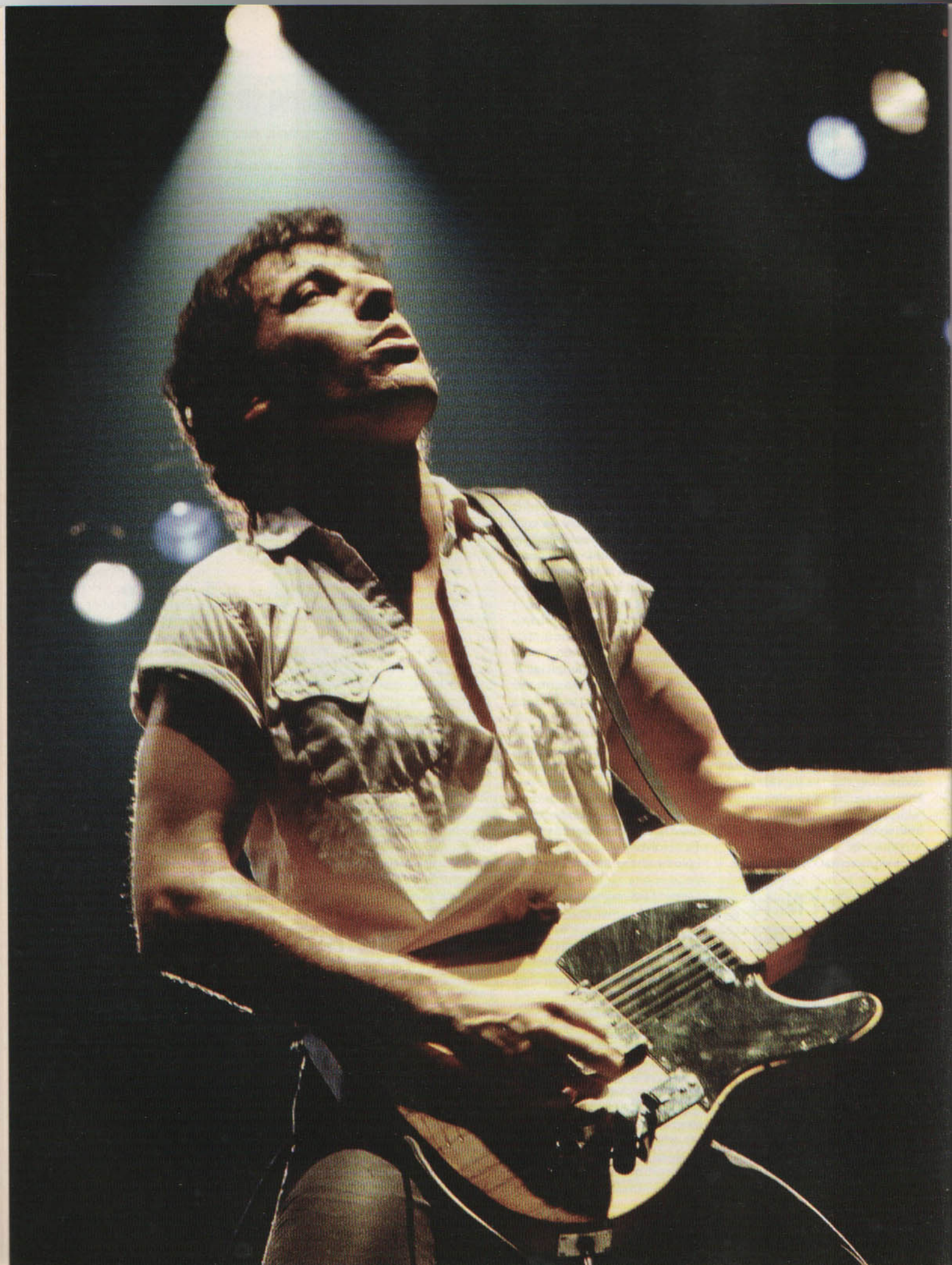
Corbett's tale takes place in the darkness on the edge of town, in the smoky shadowland of illicit back-room gambling joints. While as many shots are fired and as much blood is spilled in this story as in any of the others, the characters seem more real, and frankly, easier to root for. Like the narrator in the Springsteen song, Bobby is a guy for whom you want things to work out. He's smart, but maybe not smart enough. His girlfriend—named Trink rather than Cherry—makes her first appearance while in the craze of an asthma attack: "[She] half sat, half knelt on the tile floor, clutching the edge of the sink with a pale and skeletal hand, chest heaving as she sucked on a small silver canister of Albuterol." The mold in the walls of their apartment keeps triggering the asthma and landing Trink in the emergency room. Bobby wants what anyone would—a place of their own. But as a gambler with no credit and a shrinking nest egg, he's forced into a corner.

In this multi-dimensional character, whose motives are pure but—as the Boss himself might say—whose soul is at risk, Corbett delivers a narrative that actually does seem "inspired" by the song.

The editors of *Meeting Across the River* gave their writers a tough assignment. On its own, the song already packs the punch of a short story, so asking someone to improve on it is perhaps an unfair challenge. There's plenty of fun and creativity in this collection, but only a handful of the stories manage to deepen the impact of the original work.

Also Out Now

As part of the continuing (and brilliant) "33 1/3" series from Continuum books, *Washington Post* music writer Geoffrey Himes tackles **BORN IN THE U.S.A.** Each book in the series approaches a landmark album from a different perspective and presents a theory to be defended. *Born in the U.S.A.* would seem to be a surprising choice, given the pantheon of albums to choose from, and this makes this book all the more enlightening and rewarding. Himes combines painstaking, note-by-note analysis along with an excellent exploration and explication of the entire creative process, from songwriting to studio. You may not agree with his assertions but you certainly can't argue with his facts.



THE RIVER

CROSSROADS OF AMERICAN HISTORY

Bruce Springsteen's fifth record took a year and a half to complete and appeared as a double album. A quarter century on, *The River* endures as perhaps his most penetrating and inclusive examination of everyday life: hard work, love and fear, and yes, cars. Reflecting on its resonance, author **Jim Cullen** puts the landmark album's diverse themes and sounds in the context of the time they appeared, one in which the nation's political current shifted, and shows how Springsteen qualifies as an American conservative.

Photos: Foryoubruce.com

When *The River* was released in October 1980, the national mood in the United States was restless and unhappy. Jimmy Carter was the President; he was running for re-election but was widely blamed for the so-called "malaise" afflicting the country in a notorious speech the previous year. Yet his opponent, Ronald Reagan, made many Americans nervous about whether he was moderate enough (or even intelligent enough) to take Carter's place.

The nation's economy was shaky. Interest rates and oil prices were soaring, with widespread doubts they would ever come down. Meanwhile, Americans' confidence in their own industrial prowess was waning. Compact Japanese cars were displacing American models that were ridiculed as clumsy and prone to breakdown.

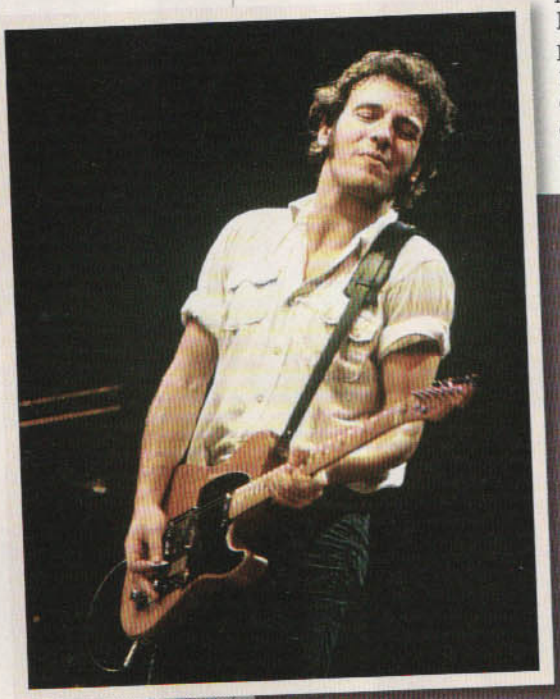
The international scene was also dismaying. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 raised Cold War tensions for the first time in many years. Most of the anxiety that October, however, was focused on the Middle East: Iraq had just gone to war with Iran. By this point the Iranian government had been holding 52 Americans hostage for almost a year. The U.S. government tilted toward the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein, selling him weapons and technical advice, and looking the other way when he brutalized his own people—just as it had with Iran before its regime was toppled by Islamic fundamentalists. With two oil shortages behind them and another one looming, it felt like twilight in America.

Within weeks, however, a profound shift was underway. Reagan defeated Carter in the presidential election, by a much larger margin than had been predicted. Upon his taking office, the Iranian government released its hostages. Those of us who lived through the period sometimes remember the clouds lifting faster than they in fact did—the recession of 1981-82 was the sharpest economic downturn since the Great Depression—but by the mid-'80s, the nation had recovered much of its collective confidence. The economy improved, the military flexed its muscles (despite a fiasco in Lebanon and a notably disorganized triumph in Grenada), and Reagan's sunny disposition lifted the pall of the late 1970s. A Chrysler jingle of the eighties—one commissioned after Springsteen rejected millions from CEO Lee Iacocca to use "Born in the U.S.A."—captured the new national mood: "The pride is back." By 1984, the nation was widely perceived as riding high again, and *Born in the U.S.A.* tapped that mood, albeit in a somewhat different way.

In retrospect, however, it's *The River* that really stands out, not only as an important landmark in Springsteen's career, but also as a document that appeared at an obvious turning point in American history. Before its release, the dominant cultural orientation of the country remained in many ways rooted in the ethos of the 1960s and '70s: secular, liberal, skeptical of large institutions (with the partial exception of the welfare state). After its release, the dominant cultural orientation moved toward that which we now think of as dominant in the '80s and '90s: evangelical, conservative, and much more uncritical about traditional authority (with the decisive exception of the welfare state). And that's pretty much where we've been ever since. ▶

This is not to say, of course, that *The River* caused or influenced this cultural shift. If anything, the album reflected a sense of traditionalism often associated with the rise of the Right. This cultural breeze seems to have touched even some culture that was decidedly not conservative—consider the difference between the stunningly dark and experimental 1980 Talking Heads album *Remain in Light*, for example, with the party-hearty mood of the 1983 album *Speaking in Tongues*, or the embrace of naïve Americana in *Little Creatures* (1985).

In Springsteen's case, though, the embrace of the tradition was no fleeting experiment or attempt to get on an ideological bandwagon. By 1980 it was increasingly apparent that Springsteen was himself a bona fide conservative. The key point of this assertion, though, is that the things he was trying to conserve were far different than those of President Reagan or Pat Robertson. A child of the '60s, Springsteen enlisted its integrative spirit in the service of preserving a vision of a nation in many ways redolent of the '50s—and long before. It was a vision that did not avoid the less attractive aspects of that nation, but nevertheless depicted and affirmed the dignity of individual lives even at their most ordinary.



Consider some of the most beloved songs from the collection. The boisterous protagonist of "Sherry Darling," exasperated with his sweetheart's garrulous mother, seems to come out of the same cultural place as *The Honeymooners* ("Sherry, my love for you is real/but I didn't count on this package deal," he complains with a bitterness you can't quite take seriously). The strutting urban dockworkers of "Out in the Street" seem to come from the generation of Springsteen's father rather than the hippie ethos of his own youth. And in an age of emerging Toyotas and Hondas, there's something unselfconciously nostalgic about "Cadillac Ranch," right down to the singer's request to have his body thrown "in the back" for one last ride, this time to eternal rest.

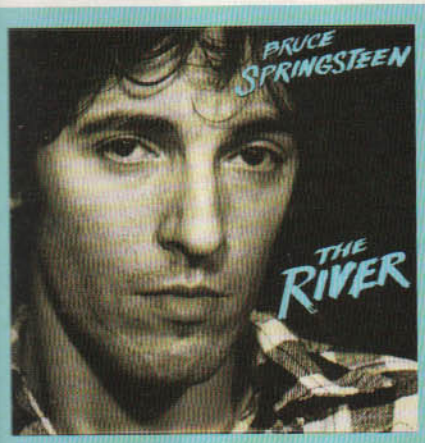
This retro spirit applies to the music no less than the lyrics. "Wreck on the Highway" evokes the classic country music of the 1940s and '50s. "I Wanna Marry You" fuses its antique romantic theme with Italo-American rock, evoking the spirit of Dion or Frankie Valli. And the Duane Eddy sound and flat vocals of "Ramrod" harken back to dawn of rock 'n' roll.

But if *The River* was simply a series of recycled gestures, it would have been quickly forgotten as a musty museum piece instead of the desert island disc it is for so many of us. The key to its durability is the way so many songs on the album deal with concerns that were—are—both contemporary and timeless. Perhaps the best example is the title track, a story of doomed love amid economic distress that is perpetually reenacted in every generation. "Drive All Night" evokes love, while "Stolen Car" evokes terrors, which sound fresh every time one hears them. And the puckish charm of "Hungry Heart," chiseled with some hard, unsentimental edges, remains catchy and edgy on the radio 25 years after its heyday as Springsteen's first Top Ten single.

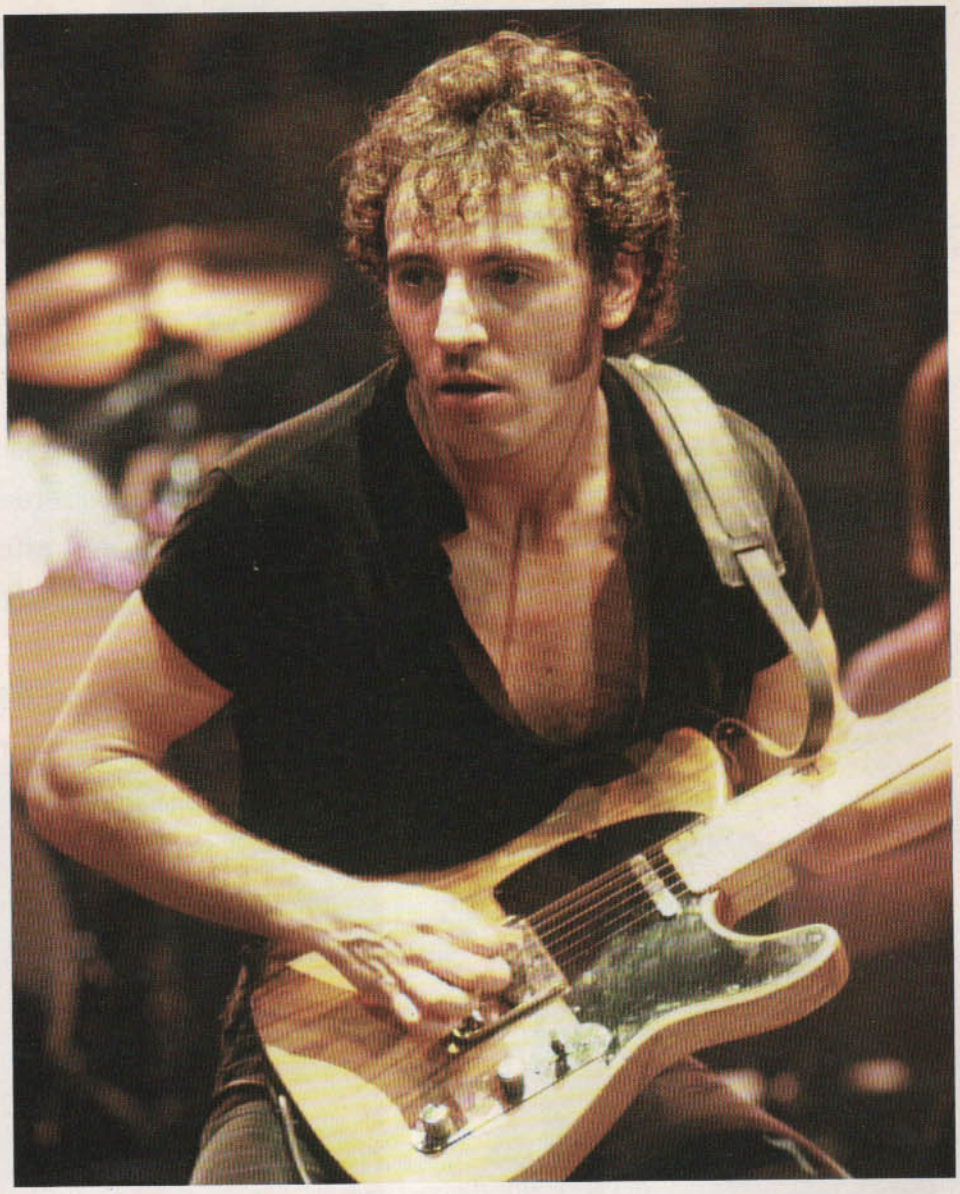
It seems fitting "Hungry Heart" shared the *Billboard* chart in December of 1980 with another hit by a musical godfather: John Lennon's "Starting Over." Both songs were in heavy rotation by the time Lennon was shot outside his New York apartment that month, and many of us sensed a kind of generational succession was taking place in the main stem of the rock 'n' roll family tree. Insofar as such a juxtaposition makes sense, it should also be said that temperamentally speaking, Springsteen was not quite a chip off the Beatle block—Lennon (and, for that matter, the man

Springsteen is most often compared
. Bob Dylan) were far more restless
xperimenters and boundary-breakers
han Springsteen ever was. As even a
ursory look at a Springsteen biography
ill tell you, in the context of his fam-
y and background, he was certainly a
ebel. But in the broader context of his
usical life and times, he clearly was
conservative. And what he was most
nterested in conserving were the tradi-
ions—musical, political, and cultural—
hat made the Beatles and Dylan pos-
ible. Those traditions (of integration,
quality, and freedom defined in terms
f personal autonomy) had always com-
eted with others (of segregation, com-
etition, and freedom defined in terms
f laissez-faire economics). But in qui-
tly and symbolically affirming them in
his *The River*—whose panoramic qual-
ty of mixed moods and genres exceeds
hat of every other Springsteen record—
he album preserved the possibility of
n imagined world were changes were
onna come.

Perhaps this discussion is taking a
lightly irritating turn: Does it really
matter whether or not Springsteen
was a conservative? Don't labels like
hat conceal as much as they reveal?
Quite possibly. And yet such designa-
ions have value, perhaps less for the
ake of appreciating the music of Bruce
Springsteen as for understanding the
ncreasingly confusing country in which
we live. In the first decade of the 21st
entury, the very meaning of the term
"conservative" seems to be unravel-
ing. Conservatives who once railed
gainst reckless spending and big gov-
ernment are now presiding over a vast
expansion of that government, spend-
ing money with the abandon of a pot-
smoking punk. Invocations of morality
are made by people whose corruption,



The River
Released: October 17, 1980
Highest *Billboard* position: Number One. Springsteen's first album to reach the top of the charts, on November 8, 1980.



and willingness to reward the rich at the expense of the poor, seem to make a mockery of the term, as do calls for "a culture of life" that seem to apply most emphatically to the unborn and near-dead. In short, Conservatives have become radical. Liberals, for their part, are exploring the possibilities of states rights, as in New Jersey's recent decision to raise the minimum wage above that of the federal government. Yet they seem to lack the moral language and confidence about the possibility of improving everyday life for the better, language and confidence that animated abolitionists, Progressives, and New Dealers at earlier moments of American history.

In short, we seem to be in a moment of drift. The times in which we live—times which can be said to have begun around the time Springsteen released *The River*—may be a-changin'. But it's not yet clear how.

Perhaps it's appropriate, then, to really spend some time thinking about what a word like *conservative* has, and might yet again, mean. To define it, as has been done many times in the past, in terms of concepts like tradition, loyalty, modesty, compassion, and doubts about radical solutions may help, but then those terms themselves have definitions that can get murky and open to debate. Yet amid all this confusion, you can always go to *The River*. As is so often the case, the best way to begin to understand is to listen.

Jim Cullen's 1997 book Born in the USA: Bruce Springsteen and the American Tradition *has been recently republished in a new edition with a foreword by Daniel Cavicchi.*

Photographer Lawrence Kirsch is currently working on a book of his Springsteen photographs from the '70s to the present and is looking for stories from fans. Visit his website, Foryoubruce.com, for details.

Danny Federici

KEEPS ON DREAMIN'

While many Springsteen fans have been saving up their hard-earned money for the next full band tour, the E Streeters themselves have been busy with other projects. Founding member and accordionist extraordinaire Danny Federici released his second solo album, *Out of a Dream,* on the V2 label in July, with plans to hit the road with his own band in tow.

The classically trained keyboardist has followed his 1997 release, *Flemington,* (re-released in 2001 on the Hip-O label), with another collection of atmospheric jazz compositions, many co-written with collaborator, musical director and saxophonist Michael Cates. This time out he also includes a couple of covers, notably the Dylan classic "Knockin' on Heaven's Door."

Just prior to the release of *Out of a Dream, Backstreets* chatted with Federici about both the album and the doings on E Street.

interview by Lisa Iannucci

This is your second release in the smooth jazz genre. What's made you want to go back into the jazz thing?

That's actually what I do; it's the music that I listen to, the kind of music that I was constantly playing. I really don't get to play it with the E Street Band, except for a Christmas show with "Kitty's Back" where Bruce looks the other way and I get to go on a little longer.... It's very hard, with ten people in the band, it's really hard to be heard. I mean, the stuff that we play is really important to Bruce's songs, but I have more to say, too. You know, I write all the time. And it's really what I like: jazzy, bluesy music—I've played it live, I have a blast doing it. A lot of E Street fans have come out and been really surprised, [they] had no idea that I could play that way.

Yeah, a lot of people don't know that you are a classically trained musician, that you studied classical accordion before you switched to jazz and then rock 'n' roll.

It's hard; I gotta do a little teaching there. I run into that in a lot of areas, even in Los Angeles where I lived—I would go to do a soundtrack, and they would be like, "Aren't you that drummer or something from the E Street Band?" And I would say, "No, I'm actually an accordion player, and I know what I'm doing."

What does one play on classical accordion?

Well, there are a lot of really intricate [works] that are German and Polish, maybe you could compare it to folk-ish ethnic songs from those countries. And there are certain songs that you play at talent shows, like "Bumblebee"... stuff that people recognize, and go, "Boy, if he can play that, he must be pretty good."

I just saw an indie film about zydeco music—have you ever pursued that genre?

Zydeco is fantastic. I played with a girl in L.A., Lisa Haley, and I had never played so much accordion in my life. We played hour sets... and I had to hold the accordion and play zydeco music, and it's really quite interesting.

I've heard a little of that when you play live with Bruce, and it just kills me because he never seems to want to go too far in that direction.

Yeah, our rehearsals are sort of our jam sessions, and it can be a lot of fun—and then we have to knuckle down and get back to the song.

You did a little session work in the late '70s and early '80s. Have you done any since then?

I played on a BoDeans record three or four years ago, but no. You know, I did Graham Parker and Joan Armatrading... a couple things back-to-back at the Record Plant when we were there [making *Darkness on the Edge of Town*]. I found out that I guess in a lot of cases, the musicians or the producers didn't know what they wanted when I got there, and I think there's a lot more work involved than really was paid for. I ended up writing half the song, or coming up with a riff, or really doing some of their jobs for them, and it took a long, long time... a lot of work for a little bit of money. It wasn't really about the money, it was about, hey I'm really contributing here.

You mentioned movie scores. Is that a genre that allows a bit more creativity for you?

Well, I moved to Los Angeles about 15 years ago

with that in mind. I went out there and I tried to hit the movie circuit, and that was how a lot of the songs on *Flemington* were created. There are a lot of pieces that I wrote with the intent to place in a movie or television—themes, or whatever, background music. A lot of these pieces were really written for television, and I added a bridge or a put a chorus in, or wrote the top of it. I had hundreds of ideas. Unfortunately, Los Angeles is a funny town when it comes to a newcomer—especially a newcomer who is no longer in the E Street Band. I sort of lost some credibility. And they had a thing where if you just moved there, you sort of have to be there for a couple years, or else they think you just want to make a quick buck and leave.

So a couple years went by, I started losing interest in that… and I put the House of Blues band together. The HOB people sort of promised us carte blanche—it was great, because I was trying to establish myself in Los Angeles—you know, that I lived there—so I played Monday nights for $100. Every Monday night you could bring people up to jam. I had Branford Marsalis come up one night, Bruce came up one night… [it was] a place where people could see me.

It didn't really turn into a whole lot of business, though. I came back to New York. I've been back and forth for the last three years. In probably a year's time I got a record deal and a book deal.

A book deal?

Yeah, I have a book coming out from Chronicle [Books] next year, it'll be Chronicle's lead book in the fall, called *My Life on E Street.* I started taking pictures when I was 19, and I have boxes full of stuff. It's really sort of secondary. But you know, when we get the *[Out of a Dream]* record going, I can go play a little bit, and I can talk about what I've done with the [E Street] band a little bit, too.

When did the stuff for this record get written? Had you been working sort of "on the side"?

I talked about a lot of it in the middle of the *[Rising]* tour, and I actually wrote a lot of it in Europe. I got really inspired by art, by paintings. There are a lot of inspirational moments when you're on tour... you know, I'm in a city and I had three days off, and it's very industrial... it gave me a lot of time, and I'd jot a lot of ideas down and put a couple riffs down on a tape recorder. This is the kind of music that I can play 'til I'm 75.

Who are some of your influences?

Brian Culbertson, David Sanborn… I'm really not into a lot of smooth jazz. My biggest problem is, they tend to repeat themselves a lot—I guess like all radio. And I get tired of hearing the same thing. I listen to talk radio, I listen to news. I don't really listen to a lot of music. But I write all the time; I just got a new system that is just phenomenal. I went to Macintosh and I got this system called Logic, and I'm writing stuff now that I didn't think was possible. I have sounds of grand piano [on there] that sound like a full Bosendorfer. It's just a fantastic creating tool, and I'm already working new stuff another record.

Will you be doing any live appearances with this [current] record?

Well, I'm putting a band together with Mark Rivera from Billy Joel's band, and actually I'm going through logistics of it right now. I had no idea how spoiled I am [touring with the E Street Band]: You gotta get a truck, you gotta haul around a lot of instruments—you know, what am I going to play? How are we going to get it around, how are we going to hook it up? There's a lot. I did it before when I put a band together and we played a couple shows… I'm in good shape, I can do it.

How has having children affected your life and work? I know it has had a profound effect on Bruce's work.

I adopted two children in my last marriage, and it was an amazing thing because they are biracial—they're Hispanic and Afro-American—and it was an amazing thing to me because I didn't know that [at the time they were adopted]. And as they got darker, I started to look around me, and to look at my prejudices and think about how I grew up. My father was Italian and my mother was Polish, and I was adopted, and I grew up very close to a black neighborhood [in Flemington], and I think some of those prejudices got pushed over onto me.

Now that I have these children in my life, not only did they really center me and make me really start to look around, but they made me look at things that were ingrained inside of me for a long time. And I started looking at everybody the same. And these children are absolutely beautiful, smart girls, and it was an amazing enlightenment when they came to me. And I don't mean to sound all "fluffy" about this, but I'm just telling you some people have children and it doesn't agree with them, and there's no book to say, you know, this is your cup of tea. These girls have had a profound effect on my life, and that's what [the song] "Golden Apples" is about.

Some of Bruce's fans may not realize that you are a founding member of the E Street Band.

Yeah, that's right. Vini Lopez and I saw Bruce and asked him to be in our band. I've told a few people that and they didn't put it in print—they didn't believe it!

What's it like to work with basically the same bunch of guys for over 30 years?

It's like they're relatives, it's like somebody's always there for you. And you don't need to see them all the time—plus, when we're not together, we're not together. We're all over the country. But we can count on everyone—Bruce has been supportive throughout my life. I've had my ups and I've had my downs, and I've certainly given him a run for his money, and he's always been there for me, and we've talked about how lucky we are. I mean, there's only maybe a handful of bands in the world that can do what we're doing.

You know, my father used to say, "You know, you'd better find something that you can do, 'cause this rock 'n' roll stuff ain't gonna last."

In the wee small hours…

DIRK VANDENBERK PHOTO

Talk a bit about what the Asbury Park was like in the early days of the band. It seemed like much more of a musicians' community, which is not the case now.

AP was quite a scene back then, it was really bustling. There were tons of clubs, they were open late, everybody was playing Top 40—you know, what was being played on the radio. I used to drive down from Flemington—I had a Volkswagen bus, I was so hippie. I had flowers on my bus, and had hardly any gas at all, and I used to drive down and hang on the shore. There was a place called the Upstage Club, it was a coffee house open till four o'clock in the morning. And all the musicians that had gigs in town, when they'd get done they'd come over to the Upstage Club and then play the music they wanted to play. So there would be 50 musicians in this place just hanging out, and all they gotta do is bring their axe and plug into the "wall of sound"— this guy Tom Potter had built a wall full of speakers and had amplifier heads in the front of the stage, and you'd just plug in and start playing. So everybody jammed with everybody, and all the band members were there—Garry was in one band, Vini was in another band—just people from all over the place could get together and just jam till four o'clock in the morning.

Do you see any kind of scene like that happening again on the Jersey Shore, or are those days pretty much over with?

I don't know if I'd recognize it. It might be a different kind of music. Maybe a little of that is going on. Things are different. You know, even the way I recorded this record is different—we put real people on it, but usually this genre of music, you use a lot of sequencers, a lot of drum machines. I don't like to play with machines. I like to put real people on the record, and when I go to cut my tracks, there's much more feeling involved, and I hope it comes across to the listener.

I hope we can get some of the people who follow the E Street Band to come over and listen…

We most recently saw the E Street Band as part of last fall's Vote for Change tour. It was interesting to see the synergy that developed, and sort of the generational thing that happened between John Fogerty, you guys, R.E.M., and then Bright Eyes. What was that like for you?

You know, we don't really play with anybody. So the whole experience of having other people there with us… I could sit back and be entertained for a change by other great people. Politically speaking, you know, I don't really have much to say—that was Bruce's thing, it was his idea, and something he really wanted to do, and it was just really a thrill. Fogerty was just fantastic, he was very energetic—he played off me a lot. James Taylor, I loved it when the Dixie Chicks played backup. Neil Young was great. I had to go over to him after I heard him play—I didn't want to say, you know, "I've been a fan of yours since I've been a little kid," but I have. He's such a gentle man, he's fantastic. Everybody was in the same mindset; we were all just having a great time.

Thinking back to the *Rising* tour, it was always a great moment when you would occasionally play the accordion on stuff like "Working on the Highway."

Danny's got a squeezebox; Steve likes to play all night.

Yeah, I always like to bring the accordion out; it gets me out from behind that big organ. It's debilitating to some degree, you know—you can only see my head. And plus it's my main axe, what I've played for years and years, I can play it backwards and forwards. It has to do with the set, it has a lot to do with what we're playing. Sometimes you just can't do it. But there have been moments where we've done our things…In fact, Nils and Roy and I started an accordion trio. We were in Switzerland, and Nils got a hold of a Swiss skiing number, and we all learned how to play it and went out and did a threesome of this song and got rave reviews!

Another of one of my favorite moments on the *Rising* tour was the organ coda on "You're Missing."

Thank you, it's always great to have a big moment in a show like that. I like that one myself.

Has the E Street Band done any studio recording since the *Rising* record?

No, we talked about doing something right after the last tour, and it really didn't happen, so everybody's off doing what they do and keeping busy.

Should fans start saving up for next year?

Well, let me tell you, they're probably saving their money anyway! I did an interview earlier today, and the guy told me that he read in the Italian press that Bruce commented that he's writing some songs—"rock songs." And I said, "Well, that's good to know," because people always ask me, and I'm always the last to know! Bruce is a lucky man—he can do what he wants when he wants, and that's really the way he operates.

We are coming up on the 30th anniversary of *Born to Run*, now recognized as a classic. You are not on that record very much—what's the reason for that?

It was funny in those days, you could look back… I don't know how that worked out. There were times where there might be a record where Roy was favored more than me, and there was a record where I was favored more than Roy. It sort of flip-flopped back and forth in those days, and I really don't have an explanation for it. Changes in mood, changes in song content. That's what it's all about, it's about coloration. And I guess as the band developed [it] became a bigger part of the whole thing. Plus it's hard to include every instrument—there are a lot of instruments, [and sometimes] it can take away. It makes the sound a lot bigger—you know, try putting three guitars on a record, it gets a little dense sometimes.

I was just talking with [Washington DC area DJ] Cerphe Colwell for the previous issue, and he mentioned the day you dropped by the old WHFS studio and played a couple of songs. Do you miss doing that kind of thing?

Well, I'm actually doing that now, so it's kinda cool… Because, yeah, we used to do that, and Vini Lopez would play on a box, and Bruce would play an acoustic guitar and me on accordion.

People still talk about that appearance here in Washington.

Yeah, not a lot of radio stations are set up to do that stuff anymore. I hear Sirius has a beautiful studio with grand pianos, though, I'm thinking about going over there and playing some piano. I talked to Max the other day and he's going to hook me up.… I'll have to do *Conan* one of these days!

Danny Federici's Out of a Dream *is out now on V2 Records. Visit www.dannyfederici.net for information and tour dates.*

Garry Tallent

THE BACKSTREETS INTERVIEW

The Tennessee Terror, Springsteen calls him. But it should come as no surprise that E Street bassist Garry W. Tallent, a resident of the Volunteer State since the late '80s, is actually downright neighborly. And that doesn't just mean being a Southern gentleman, it means helping out friends in need.

Alison and Doug Kirk are friends of the Tallents in Nashville, and their need began coming to light just about a year ago, when their five-year-old daughter Caroline was diagnosed with the obscure (and usually fatal) Niemann-Pick Disease. And though this genetic disorder is extremely rare—there are currently around 50 reported cases in the U.S.—Caroline's younger sister Kate was soon diagnosed with the same. In the summer of 2005, Tallent rounded up a crew of friends and neighbors—including Buddy & Julie Miller, John Prine, Bob Delevante, Steve Earle and Allison Moorer—to pitch in for a Christmas CD, which he executive produced, to help the For Kate's Sake fundraising effort. The result is *To: Kate: A Benefit for Kate's Sake,* much of which was recorded at Garry's MoonDog Studios in Nashville, and which was released by Western Beat Entertainment just in time for the holidays.

One hundred percent of the proceeds from the album will go through the Children's Organ Transplant Association to help the Kirks and, hopefully, other families in similar situations. "There are a lot of different reasons that children need transplants," Tallent says, "and when they're needed, there's no time to raise money. It's got to be done today." Garry spoke with *Backstreets* by phone from his home in Nashville.

interview by Christopher Phillips

How did the *To: Kate* record come together?

Well, it happened real fast. The need came up, and we were just trying to figure out ways to raise some money for the girls. This is something that I've been mulling over for 20 years now, and I just never really got around to doing it.

A Christmas compilation?

Yeah. I've always tried to find cool Christmas music, I've always had an affinity for it, and I always thought that there was just a dearth of it; in the last few years there's been a lot more around. I remember talking about this kind of thing 25 years ago, and Jimmy Iovine just took it and ran with it—he started doing the *A Very Special Christmas* series. People were doing it, and so I put it on the back burner. But I've had some arrangement ideas and things that I would like to hear from my own collection. And it took this [cause] to get me off my lazy butt.

So I had the idea, and I was playing tennis with Billy Block, who runs the Western Beat label, and I asked if he might be willing to put some time and energy into something like that. He was game for it.

How involved were you in terms of production?

Well, I produced about half of it. I played on about half of it. Some of the things were done at my studio with me, and some other things—Joe Ely did his thing in Austin, and Raul Malo did his in his home, just sat down in his studio and did all the parts himself. Then for Jason & the Scorchers or BR-549, I pretty much did the arrangements—I was more hands-on. So it's basically just a hodgepodge of a lot of things, from different sources, only held together by the fact that it's all kind of "alt-country" *[laughs],* or...

Or whatever they call that stuff.

Yeah, whatever you call it! "Americana." But I realized when I chose to do a Christmas record that it probably wasn't the *smartest* thing to do, since I had to have it done quickly. But we succeeded in doing that. June 28 was the first recording date, and we did the whole record in a month—started recording on the 28th of June and we were mastering on the 28th of July. There was no hemming and hawing or dilly-dallying going on. If we wanted it out for Christmas this year, that's just what had to be done.

What track on there are you most excited about?

You know, I'm going to let everybody else choose their favorites. I led off the record with BR-549. They're doing a remake of "The Christmas Song"—you know, "chestnuts roasting on an open fire"—but it's kind of a western swing version. I don't think anybody has ever quite done it this way. That came out real good, I'm pleased with that.

But I'm pleased with a lot of it. Rosie Flores has an original song that she did—we have a band here in Nashville, we call ourselves the Long Players; once a month we go to a club and we'll do a classic album beginning to end, and bring in guest vocalists and what have you. And so on that track we have the Long Players backing up Rosie Flores, and that's fun. It's a

song no one's heard before, obviously—I think it's a great song.

The whole thing seems like a nice mix of originals and covers—songs you know and songs you don't know.

It's almost half and half. Even the treatments of the chestnuts—pun intended—are quite different. I don't think you've heard them done quite this way before. There are a lot of classics: Buddy Miller is doing "Away in a Manger," and then we've got a rocked-up version of "Oh! Holy Night" by Jason & the Scorchers. It's really pretty eclectic. So, I'm proud of the album—but I think the cause is the main selling point.

Tell me more about For Kate's Sake and how you got involved. I know it's a local thing—are they friends of yours?

Yeah, good friends. Before any of us had kids, a group of us—including the Delevante brothers and the Kirks, that's Kate and Caroline's family—we would rent a house on the beach. Five families, we'd just kind of have a week down at the beach, have fun and hang out. That was before any kids. As the years progressed, next thing you know there's a whole house full of kids. So, I've known Kate and Caroline since they were born. I'm very close to the family. And Caroline is three days younger than my son; they went to preschool together, and they were just very close.

A few years ago, we realized that something was wrong, but nobody really knew what it was. It took years of going to doctors in New York and everywhere else to finally diagnose what the problem was with Caroline. That finally happened, and the diagnosis was not good—and it seemed to come too late to help her. Then Kate was born, and people saw the same kinds of signs. They were told that the odds were at least a million to one, even though it was genetic, that that two of them would have the same disease, and yet that's exactly what happened. At least the good part is that they were ready for the diagnosis. They knew what the problem was. So hopefully, Kate can lead a somewhat normal life. She has a real shot. And, as a matter of fact, it's already good: she had the surgery already. It's going to take another nine months or so of keeping her in the hospital—it's a big procedure. They're there at the hospital now. She's there every day. They're there every day. And so the expenses are eating them alive. Plus, the family is separated because the father and Caroline are still here in Nashville. They go back and forth as much as they can—we're just trying to make it as easy for them as we can, financially. There's not a whole lot else anybody can do.

But the prognosis is very good. To the point now that they're even thinking that they might be able to do something for Caroline, which is even greater. It's a very long shot, but everything went so well for Kate so far. It's going so well that they're willing to give it a try.

This album is a great thing to be able to do to help out. Was everybody pretty enthusiastic about it? It looks like a bunch of people that you've worked with before, friends of yours and that kind of thing.

Yeah, it really was just a neighborhood thing—and that just happens to be neighborhood I live in. Which is kind of cool—some really talented people. They were very enthusiastic—I just made a bunch of phone calls, and everybody jumped on board. I think Jim Lauderdale was the first one I mentioned it to, and he said, "Oh, yeah, I have a Christmas song." It seems like everybody has a Christmas song that they've written that they don't know what to do with. It's hard to put a Christmas song on a regular album, even though some people do. So, that was a good part of it, too—people saying, "Well, yeah! I was wondering what to do with that."

How long have you been in Nashville now?

17 years, it's hard to believe.

How are things at MoonDog?

Well, MoonDog is still there—I haven't really done a whole lot there lately. But we do a few projects, and quite a few records have come out of there. Phil Lee is starting his album there, he's a very cool singer-songwriter here in town. He's got a couple records on Shanachie, critically acclaimed. Another friend of mine, Richard Bennett, is producing his records. But, yeah, it's not really that busy a studio.

Is that the way you like it?

That's the way I like it. It's kind of a clubhouse more than anything else. I don't like too much traffic in and out of it. Basically, it's people I like, people whose music I like, and my own projects. It's been there 15 years now, too.

You've done some great productions, for the Delevantes, Steve Forbert, Evan Johns.... Do any favorites stand out?

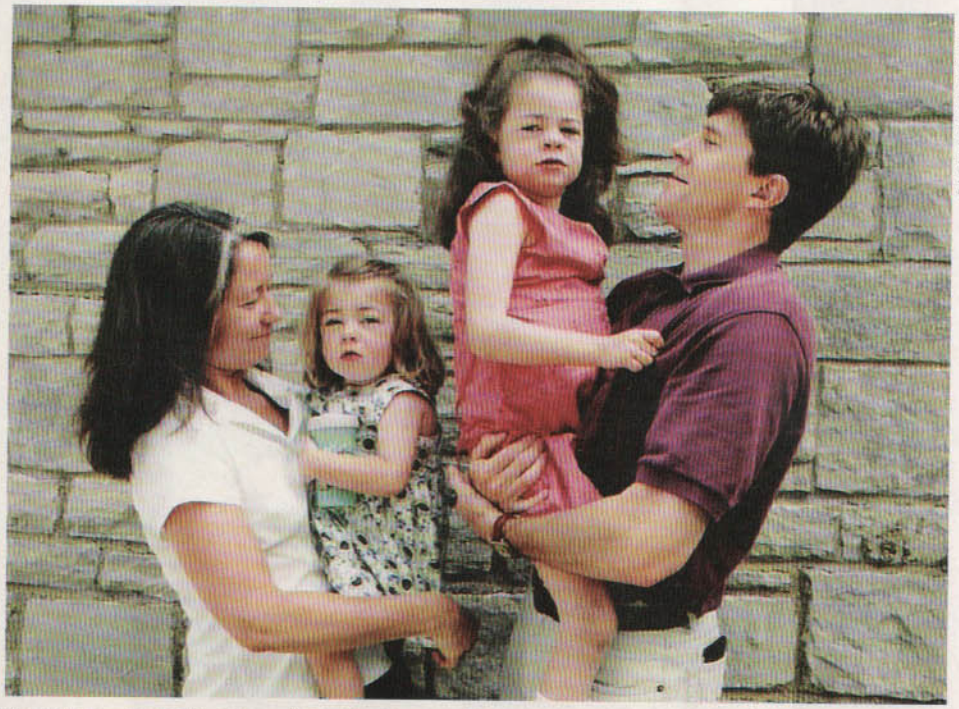
You know, I've liked all of the people that I've worked with. Kevin Gordon, Duane Jarvis.... it's not a *real* long list, but.... well, I still have a soft place in my heart for the Delevantes. I really like the guys, and I like the music. I pretty much played in the band—I did a couple of promotional tours with them in the van. And I was kind of disappointed that it didn't get off the ground. I still hold a grudge for Garth Brooks pulling the plug on that.

In a direct way?

Oh, yeah! He was getting ready to release his

LOTS OF NICE LITTLE PRESENTS

1. BR549 "The Christmas Song"
2. Jim Lauderdale "Holly & Her Mistletoe"
3. Buddy & Julie Miller "Away in a Manger"
4. The Big Happy "Gift Wrapped Boy"
5. Bob Delevante "Half Bad in the Snow"
6. John Corbettt "Ain't No Trouble to Me"
7. Joe Ely "Winterlude"
8. Jason & the Scorchers "Oh! Holy Night"
9. Raul Malo "Pretty Paper
10. Steve Earle & Allison Moorer "Nothing But a Child"
11. Henry Gross "What a Christmas"
12. Rosie Flores "Christmas Everyday"
13. John Prine "I'll Be Home for Christmas"
14. Jeff Black "Winter Wonderland"



DEVI SANFORD PHOTO

The Kirk Family (L-R): Alison, Kate, Caroline, and Doug.

record, and he had enough clout with Capitol Nashville that, basically, he had the president fired, he had his guy put in there, and had everything dropped so they could just pay attention to his record.

That's the music biz. So it really knocked the wind out of the two brothers' sails. Mike has kind of given up music entirely, which is probably good, because he's really a successful website designer. He's got a great business going here. Bob has continued [in music]— some albums and stuff. But that was a project that I was really close to.

And you've got Bob on the Christmas album. I was also happy to see Joe Ely on there—I'm a big fan of the Flatlanders, and Joe has been one of those guys who it's been fun to see pop up at Bruce shows from time to time.

Yeah, just real energetic, a down-to-earth person, and a great performer. I've known Joe for quite a while. Really, he's living in Austin now, so I can't say we're best pals or anything, but he's just one of those great guys when I call him, he says, "Heyyyy! What's goin' on?" He's a guy who says, "Yeah, man, I'm in—let's do something." He helped me out when we did the benefit in Red Bank a few years ago for the 9/11 families—he came up with me to New Jersey. Actually, that was good for him, because he wasn't that well known in that area, and by virtue of doing that show with us, he's got a following in central Jersey now! *[Laughs]* He's terrific, just a real mensch. You know: "Yeah, I'm there"—and he comes through.

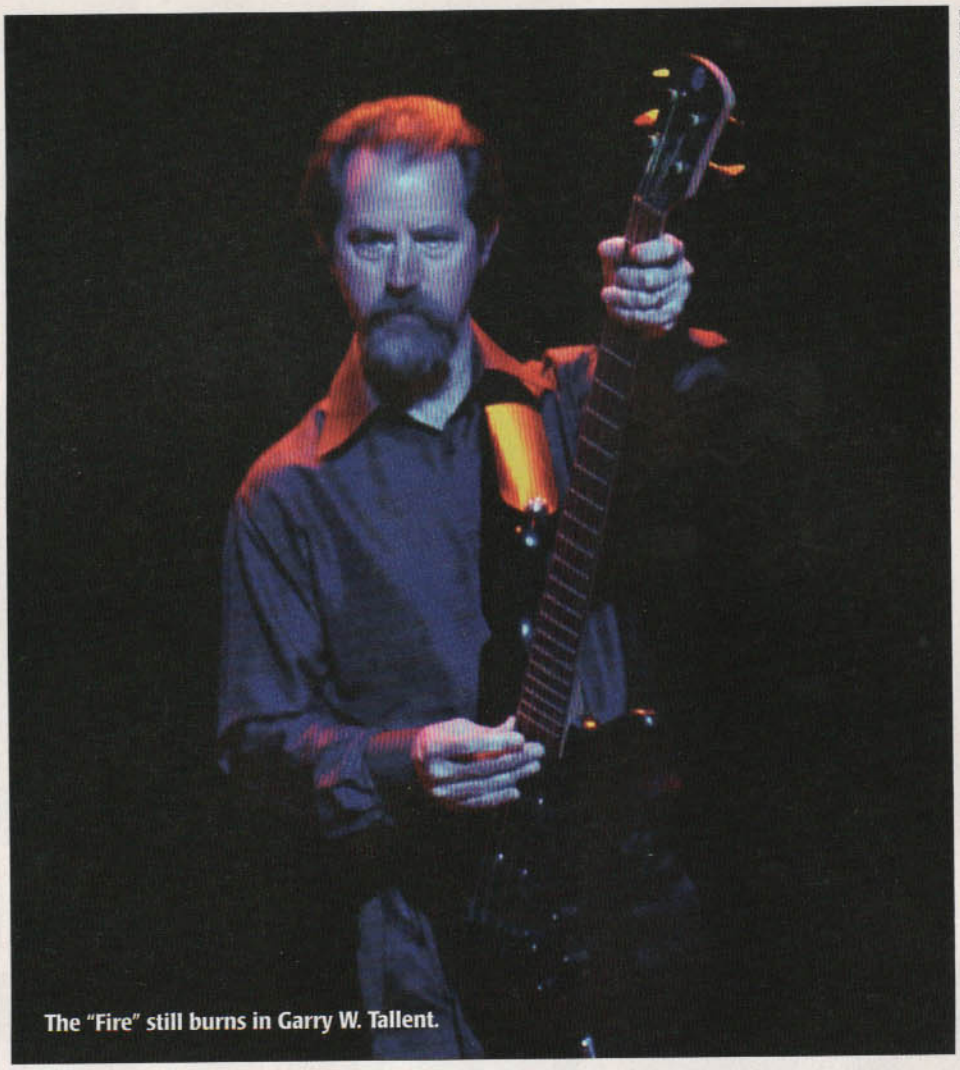
It's great to see Jason & the Scorchers back, too.

Yeah, that was a unique situation in that, basically, they'd been broken up for three years, and I kind of got them back together for this track. That's one of those things that I'd been hearing in my mind for all these years, a different take on that song. Jason helped us out when we did *Blonde on Blonde* with the Long Players, so I got in touch with him, and one thing led to another. He was kind of apprehensive—he thought maybe the treatment of the song might be a little sacrilegious—but I worked on him and gave him my sales pitch.

Next thing you know, we got in touch with [Scorchers guitarist] Warner [Hodges], Warner was into it, and we went ahead and cut the track. And in the process, wanting to find somebody to do the harmony and vocals, we were able to get [Scorchers drummer] Perry Baggs back into the fold—which was a very great thing, and very sweet. I think there might have been some hard feelings around the breakup of the band, and by virtue of this happening they're kind of back and talking, and friends again, so that's a good thing that came out of it: a reunion.

I'd love to hear more about the Long Players—I think that's something that not a lot of E Street Band fans know much about.

Well, it's a fun thing that we decided to do. We've been doing it a couple of years. A bunch of us are just old vinyl junkies, and we'd get together every once in a while and play records. Everybody would show up with a fistful of old albums—and 45s, and 78s—and play things that the other people may not have ever heard of, and try to turn them on to odd music that they really feel is great. One thing led to another… one night we just had a little too much to drink and said: You know what we need to do? We need to put a band together. We'll pick a classic album and we'll do it, beginning to end—even take a break in the middle, before doing the other side. And we'll just do it one time, one time only. Minimal rehearsal, just everybody learn the album, we'll all get together just to make sure we're in the same key. And do it one time and never do it again. No tape, no videotape—just performance art.



DEBRA L. ROTHENBERG PHOTO

The "Fire" still burns in Garry W. Tallent.

And we've been doing it! We've probably done about 13 or 14 albums. We've done *Blonde on Blonde* and *Let it Bleed*… oh, and *After the Gold Rush, Sgt. Pepper*… the list goes on. Just a vast array of different things.

Didn't you do the first Pretenders record, too?

We did that just recently. We did *Damn the Torpedoes* last month, and we did the Pretenders before that. And the great part of it is, we'd have guests come in and do the vocals. The Long Players would be the house band, and we'd bring in guest vocalists, like Jason. There's such a vast pool of talent here—we did three or four shows before we even had "repeats."

Who else have you had on vocals?

Jimmy Hall, Dan Baird, Southside Johnny.… I'm going to leave so many people out. It's a *lot.* Like I said, I've even lost track of how many albums we've done.

Do you remember what Southside sang on?

With Southside we did *Let It Bleed,* and he did *[sings]* "When the train left the station.…" [the Rolling Stones' "Love in Vain"].

But you're not recording these at all? Nothing for posterity?

No—that's part of the thing. I think some people have snuck tapes in, which is a no-no, but you can't always control that. But, yeah, the idea is, you say, "Hey, wasn't that great?" You don't have somebody come along two years later playing a tape proving that it *wasn't* great. *[Laughs]* There's so little rehearsal, it's not perfect. But it's just a vibe, and it's just real fresh, and we just put it out there, and everybody seems to have a good time—and that's it.

Speaking of such things, how do you feel about all the bootlegs that are out there of E Street Band shows? Is that a different thing?

Well, I don't quite understand it. I don't understand how somebody has to have the live tapes of every show we've ever done. I guess that really is a little bit of overkill. But I'm a music fan, too; I have bootlegs of Elvis on *Louisiana Hayride,* and even though the quality is not that great, I have three or four different versions of it. So I understand.

But there's just so *much* of it. With the Grateful Dead and Springsteen, there's just so *much* of it, I mean, jeez, how do you have time to *hear* it all?

Well, that's true. I think at a certain point people are collecting way more than they're listening. I'm guilty of that with music in general.

Yeah, I've got a stack of things that I've been wanting to listen to and haven't had a chance.

Are you still into record collecting?

Yeah, I am. I don't spend the time going to flea markets and all that stuff anymore—that's become an exercise in futility. But I enjoyed all those years I did it, and I'll still drop by a yard sale once in a while.

You and Southside have been collecting together for a long time—any sense of how big the collection is?

Well, I keep making it smaller. It's just so large, I'm really in the process of figuring out what it is exactly that I want to collect and what kind of music I really like and want to have on vinyl. So I keep eliminating things all the time. Southside and I will go through and play things:

"What is *this* doing in here?"

"Well, I like it! Listen to it again!"

"Aaaaah, it *stinks,* get rid of it!"

"What do you mean? I like it!"

[Laughs] We go back and forth, but yeah, we've eliminated thousands of records in the last few years. Just because, you know, you can't collect everything. If it's just something you want to have around, the "greatest hits" of somebody, then that's what CDs and mp3 players are for. They take up a lot less space.

Let's talk about this *Born to Run* package that's coming out. Have you been able to see this Hammersmith footage from '75?

I haven't seen the whole thing—but I've seen a little bit of it, yes. It's quite good. I don't remember that it was being filmed that night, but it was such an intense night that there's a lot I don't remember about it. What I *really* remember is that it wasn't really a great show!

Do you really remember it that way?

Oh, yeah, sure! I remember just being like, "This is *weird,* we're just not going *over* here." You know, "This is not good!" People were just sitting on their hands and listening, and we weren't used to that. By the end of the show I remember that people came around. But, yeah, for most of the show I just remember feeling very, very tense—feeling like, *this is not happening.* Looking back all these years later will either verify that, or make me realize I was wrong and we *were* going over. I don't have a sense of the "tale of the tape."

It is pretty wild, this is the show that I've always heard that about—that it did not go over, that in many ways it was a disappointment, as the story has been told over the years—and all of a sudden, it becomes the centerpiece for this big *Born to Run* celebration.

Well, I guess just because it exists.

Yeah there's that. But I'll also say that I was pretty knocked out by the footage I saw, and I wondered if you guys had to work a little harder to try to win the crowd over.

[Laughs] We were working, that's for sure.

Last time *Backstreets* did an interview with you was way back in 1993—of course it was in that sort of "dark period" for the band, relatively soon after the breakup. And so as time has passed and, obviously, you've gotten back together a few times now, I'm wondering what your outlook on the band is like now as opposed to the last time we talked to you.

Well, I think my outlook on the band has been pretty much the way it is now. It's always been: if there's something going on, it's great to do it. And if there's not, then everybody is able to find their own niche, find their own spot in this world, and do their things independently as well. I think that's what's been able to keep the band together all this time.

I speak for myself, of course, but when the band was fired—broke up, whatever you want to call it, *replaced*—it was a little bit of a shock to everybody. But it's not like no one ever saw it coming. I mean, it was a case where we had *done* everything. And rock 'n' roll was pretty much dead. That was part of the reason that I went to Nashville: the writing was on the wall that the kind of music that we were doing was not in favor.

But when Bruce talked about wanting to try different things, I was thinking in terms of him doing something like what Paul Simon did with African music. You know, just really go out there and do something really different and experimental. And so my disappointment in that was the fact that he just basically just had session guys imitating the E Street Band. As a fan, I was kind of hoping, really, to hear what Bruce would come up with. And my biggest disappointment was *that,* more than not being involved. It was really not any different than if I *were* involved.

A quote I wanted to read you from that 1993 interview was when you were talking about joining that ['92-'93] band on stage and you said, "It wasn't a whole lot of fun." Then you went on to say, "It got me thinking that maybe the band should have ended after the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour. Even the *Tunnel of Love* tour wasn't the real thing. The magic was gone. It really was."

Yeah—you know, I felt that way then. Looking back, I felt that way. It's valid. I only played on one song on the album, *Tunnel of Love.* It really was a solo album, it wasn't an E Street band album. And at the time of doing the tour, it was approached that way. The staging—initially, they were trying to stage it in a more theatrical way, and have the band just kind of be a backdrop. It wasn't the same.

And you felt that as the tour went on?

Oh, absolutely. It's like it didn't feel like the old band. And I was having my moments where I was saying, "Well, why am I doing this?" And I'd bet Bruce had those moments, too. Hell, we played together since I was 20, I guess he was 20—we were 20-year-old kids. You've got to be curious to see what else you can do out there. And I did the same thing by moving to Nashville. I've had this conversation with Bruce—I mean, how good it feels to know that you can go into a recording session with complete strangers, and you're completely out of your element, and you can still hold up your end and do what's needed and play on this track that's completely foreign to anything you've done before. I found that very gratifying. You know, I'd played in the same band for all those years and didn't do a whole lot of outside stuff.

That's been my impression just from talking to various people in the band, that as difficult as it might have been at the time, it was really good for everybody to get away from that place of comfort—Bruce included—to see what else you could do and stand on your own.

How about Max? I mean, Max has become a TV celebrity. That never would have happened if everybody kind of went on, la-di-da, you know, "We're a band and we're going to stick to this forever." He fell in a great place. And I feel like I did the same—I mean, I like my life here. Like I said, 17 years, I can't believe it. I didn't intend to be here this long. Nashville is just a great music town—not just country music, even though country music kind of keeps the industry and the studios going—but there's a lot of different types of songwriters and musicians, and it's just a hotbed for ideas. You can do things like—well, anything you *want* to do, really, like this Christmas record. We do a John Lennon tribute in December each year—just a lot of things to do to keep me active. The reason I do the Long Players is just for the excuse to keep learning, keep playing, and do different things—just keep pushing, keep learning.

Well, it's interesting you say that about Nashville. The myth I often hear is of people frustrated with the town, in terms of the music industry. You know, like the Robbie Fulks song, "Fuck This Town," or historically, the Texas/Austin contingent, "outlaw country" and that kind of thing. So it's kind of nice to hear that you find Nashville a good, creative place to be.

Well, I'm in a different place than Robbie Fulks. He was trying to get off the ground as a performer—and the fact is, he had something to write about *[laughs].* It's good material! You're not going to write that in Peoria, you know?

But it is frustrating. The fact is, country music is what it is, and you're not going to come in and change that overnight. I found that out. I came here thinking, "Well, rock 'n' roll is dead. Where is the future of rock 'n' roll? It's in country music." And I came down here working with Steve Earle, and [Radney] Foster & [Bill] Lloyd, and the kinds of things that I thought were the future of country music. Well, I was very naïve to think that the powers that be in this town would just roll over and let these Yankees take over. It's not going to happen.

The sort of "country music" that's been on the radio for the past 15 or 20 years is so far from what we really think of as country music. It's basically pop—"rural contemporary" is what passes for country these days.

Yeah, I equate it with Olivia Newton-John records in the '70s. It's not country. It's all a phase. But rock 'n' roll has been guilty of that. The fact is that the real artists remain underground—it's just different from the rock 'n' roll movement of the '70s when underground, the "new wave," became accepted and successful. That hasn't happened to country music yet.

And maybe it never will. I've produced a lot of these so-called alt-country things. The Greg Trooper record, which I put out on my own label in the '90s, that was the number one Americana record. That's the best you could do. I think we sold six or ten thousand copies. I mean, it's a flop by anybody else's standards. So, it's just *not* the big thing. And until the next Elvis comes along, or the next Beatles comes along to bring everybody else on their coattails, it's just going to remain that way.

The magazine *No Depression* just hit a big milestone—their tenth anniversary issue was just published, which is great to see. But in

Layin' down the line on *The Rising* tour. Richmond, VA, March 6, 2003.

that time the genre itself hasn't really taken off or entered the mainstream in any real way.

No. I think it's just going to take a face—an image that is undeniable. But I think that even if that person comes along, if they're not careful they're going to be swallowed up by the Music Row industry, and it becomes something other than what it really is as an artistic statement.

Music is so disposable; the world has become so small. What happened in those early days of rock 'n' roll was amazing—what happened between 1956 and 1959 was a revolution. And what happened when the Beatles, between 1964 and 1967—think about the difference between "She Loves You" and "Sgt. Pepper." It's just *amazing* what happened in that short amount of time.

Now, tell me what happened in the last three years? In the last ten years? The last 15 years? Nothing. They're just re-packaging the same stuff. I mean, even rap is going on 25. Grandmaster Flash—it was *great*, it was exciting when he came up. And that seems funny coming out of the mouth of someone who loves traditional music. And I do. But still, it's got to be something that brings new excitement into it—or just let it go entirely, and we'll start all over again.

I think the same thing has happened to hip-hop that happened to country music in terms of what gets played on the radio: it's such a far cry from the roots of the music that it's really pandering to the audience in a lot ways. And like alt-country or Americana, there's some great stuff going on, but it stays in the underground and hasn't really reached the masses.

I think even the Americana thing, the bar is raised so high that—I mean, everything is good! I don't really hear crap coming out of it. And yet, I don't really hear a whole lot of things that I can really call *great*. And that's the difference between people getting *excited* about something versus saying "Yeah, it's good."

What are you listening to these days? Anything grabbing you?

Thelonious Moog. It's Thelonious Monk played on a Moog synthesizer. It's wacky, electronic music—it's fun. And Greg Trooper's album is great. Dan Penn produced his last album—I think it's even better than the work I can do. *[Laughs]* The songs are great, his singing's great, Dan Penn is a great producer. I think it's a very cool record.

And you know, I'm still discovering music that was made 30 years ago—things that I just haven't been aware of. There's so much stuff out there that's exciting. If they never make another record again, that would probably be okay for a while.

What about *Devils & Dust*, have you spent some time with that at all?

I haven't spent *enough* time with it. I like it, I think it's good—I think Brendan [O'Brien] does a great job, and Bruce has always got great songs. I haven't really had a chance to spend enough time to really absorb it all. But it sounds good. Some good rockers

DEBRA L. ROTHENBERG PHOTO

on there—and it's not *Nebraska* revisited, it really is a different thing.

I haven't had a chance to see the solo tour. I missed it by a day in Italy, and he hasn't come to Nashville. I saw the last [solo] tour, and I just was knocked out. He played the Ryman [Auditorium in Nashville, 12/12/96], and it was brilliant. I loved seeing Bruce in that setting. The Ryman was a great place. I haven't seen any of the arena shows—I can't imagine, but it seems to be going over very well.

Yeah, amazingly so. I've seen theater shows and arena shows on his tour–and I'd much rather see it in a theater, but I've been surprised that it really does come across in an arena. And one of the fun things about it–as opposed to what you talked about with the '92-'93 band–it seems like he *is* pushing himself. He's playing a lot of piano, and breaking out a lot of different instruments, from the ukulele to the pump organ. He's challenging himself, and that's always fun.

I'd give Brendan a lot of credit for that. Different sounds, not going for that same patch on the synthesizer that always seems to work. Really getting out of the same old bag of tricks. Bruce playing a banjo—I think that's wonderful.

Exactly. What were the *Rising* sessions like with Brendan?

Well, I was just there for the tracking. It was the easiest record I ever did with Bruce—including the first one, even. Brendan is great—it's fun, it's engaging. He doesn't just go for the "would you do this again?" He's always looking for the angle. I would try different sounds, different instruments. I don't know how much of a difference it made in the end, whether you can hear it—you know, that's a Fender bass, that's a different bass—but it just made it, personally, much more gratifying to me. I think with Bruce it really made him realize that as great as all that stuff is he was doing before that, he's really capable of even more if he just digs a little harder. That's what Brendan has been able to do.

And making a record doesn't have to be hell. I mean, there's going to be a lot of talk in the next few weeks about the *Born to Run* sessions and how grueling they were. I'm sure that has changed quite a bit.

Yeah, it's the first time that Bruce has worked with a really confident, knows-what-he's-after producer. And I think it took Bruce a while to realize—he's just so used to turning over every stone, and Brendan is able to say hey, that's *good*... he likes to experiment, but he also knows when you've *got* it, and can say "stop," and move on. No one was ever able to do that with Bruce. He was not sure, he thought maybe he was missing something... so you'd wind up just going after something, you don't know what it is, and you'd get kind of bogged down. No one was ever there to say, "Hey, Bruce—you've *got* it. Stop."

What enables Brendan to do that, do you think–is it that he hasn't been around for all the rest of it?

Exactly. I'm hoping that it continues, and he doesn't fall into the same trap of, "Well, Bruce is the boss," so you go along with it. But Brendan, he's got other things going. He's got a schedule. He's producing the next thing—he doesn't have *time* to get bogged down in that. He knows when he's done. So it's confidence, musical ability, ears—all those things that make a great producer. I learned a lot from Brendan, just being around him the little bit that I was. But again, I was there only for tracking—I was there four times.

Can you explain how that worked? When you talk about the tracking...

Basically, tracking is where you get the rhythm section of the band—which in this case was Bruce, Max, Roy and myself—in a room and do the foundation. We lay the track—lay the foundation for everything else to go on top. For many years, we've always pretty much just gotten everybody in at the same time, everybody played live, and we decided when we got it, we got it. Or, we would do it 20 more times and then realize we had it on the first take! *[Laughs]* With Brendan, it's more layered, a more thought-out process.

So, when you were in there with Max and Roy and Bruce, would the four of you be playing live together?

Yes.

And then everything else was layered on after that.

Right. But there again, we would go about things differently. Some things we would do in sections. That's something we'd never done before—we'd do one section of the song, and then do another section, and it would be put together later on. We would do things where Max would not be playing the whole kit, he'd just be playing a *sound*—something out of the ordinary, on maybe just two or three drums, and add something to that later. You know, not just going about things in the usual way. Taking you out of your element and putting you in a new element, and seeing what happens.

Did you like how that record turned out?

Oh, I love it. I think it's kind of a comeback album—it *was* a comeback album.

Really, the first band album since *Born in the U.S.A.*

Exactly. And I thought that was real important, I mean, I think it has a modern sound. It doesn't sound like it was made in 1985. And yet it's true to what we do and to what Bruce does. I was very pleased with it—I was really gratified that it was accepted. And the songs were great—that's got a lot to do with it; that's what you have to start with. I just think that having Brendan on the scene made it that much better.

In terms of taking that record on the road, part of why I read you that quote earlier is just to see what things felt like when you came back together and toured again these last few years. Did it feel like the magic came back?

Yeah—the last couple tours we've done, it's just been great. You know, all the things that would be an issue during the *Tunnel of Love* tour are just completely gone. Everybody has grown up: things don't get on their nerves anymore; everybody is a little more easygoing, a little more confident; everybody has been able to prove themselves in other venues with other musicians. I know for myself, there were times when I said, "Jeez, you know, I just play the way I play." I mean, Jaco Pastorius was a pal of mine, and Daryl Jones, and Will Lee—these guys are just *schooled.* And I felt like a real piker next to these guys.

But after being able to be away from the band for a while—and doing Nashville sessions, like with Robert Earl Keen, all these different things I was able to do—it just gives puts a whole different perspective on what you do. You realize: well, I'm not schooled, and I'm not Jaco, but I am who I am, and it's not a bad thing.

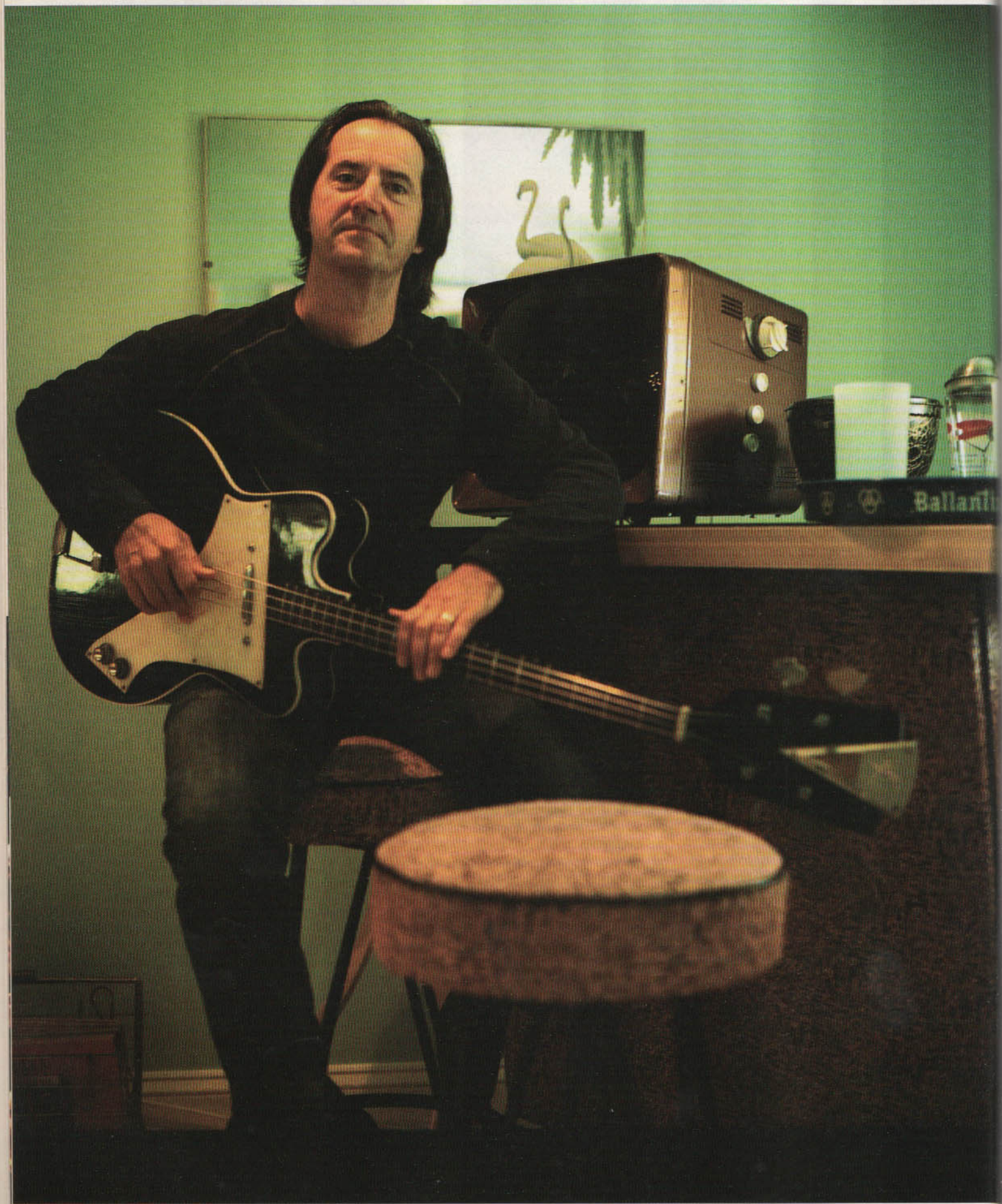
So everybody in the band came back in with that new feeling of confidence in themselves, that it wasn't just "you and the band"... it was "you, and the band." The fact that what I do helps make the band what it is—that was something that took a lot of time to realize.

I gotta say, I saw quite a few shows on the reunion tour and the *Rising* tour, and one of the great things about seeing multiple shows is having the luxury to pay attention to different things. And I really enjoyed paying attention to what you do on the bass in the band, in terms of the middle ground that you find between holding down the bottom and then playing some pretty complicated runs and melodies. Can you talk about your style a bit as a bass player?

Well, I didn't take lessons. When the Beatles came out, they had a bass player—and so every band on every street corner decided they needed a bass player. But nobody knew what a bass *did.* I played the tuba in the school band, and I kind of had an idea of what the role of a bass was. And I played the guitar, because my mother had one around the house, and she taught me a few chords. So, I put the two together and joined bands. I'd go from one band to another and learn from those experiences.

Basically, I just grew up learning from the records: from Motown and James Jamerson, to Paul McCartney, Bill Wyman... believe it or not, Tim Bogert of Vanilla Fudge—I learned a *lot* from those records. You just kind of pick up this and pick up that. And I've been lucky enough to *not* play in cover bands since the time I was 20 years old. I was playing original material, and some of the best material that you could ever ask for. So I just kind of wound up playing whatever I thought could fit, that was interesting to me and hopefully to the listener as well—you know, not just plodding along and playing the bass part. I always wanted to make sure, if somebody were to choose to just listen to what the bass was doing, they wouldn't be bored to tears, that there could be something there that they could listen to.

I remember doing a James Jamerson tribute years ago, where they would just transcribe all his parts, and they made a record with a lot of bass players participating. I participated on one thing, and they sent me a cassette with all these Motown tracks without any vocals, just the bass mixed real loud. And that was kind of fun. But I realized that my wife—I'd leave it in the cassette player in the car, and my wife would be driving around town and that's what she would listen to! Because she really loves the bass by itself. It's a really cool solo instrument, and really, he was *the* genius. That tells you a lot, that people could just listen to that and nothing else. Add on top of that a great lyric and a great vocals—that's just gravy!


Ballanti

There was that great moment on the reunion tour [6/24/99 in Stockholm] when you started playing the bassline to "Fire"—does that stand out in your mind at all?

Well, early on in the tour, when Bruce was doing introductions of the band, we'd each get a moment to play a little bit. I kind of made it a game between Max, Nils and myself—the trick was to play something different every night. Different, and yet recognizable. So, just one night, the thing I happened to play was "Fire." And it was in the wrong key, because I had to do it in the key of what we were doing at the moment. But it was funny—it sparked a moment, the band started playing it, and Bruce started singing it… and then we just went back into "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out."

And then the next night, somebody had put up a sign saying that they wanted to hear "Fire" again. *[Laughs]* But I had a bet with Nils and Max that I wouldn't repeat myself! So I refused to play it. I think I did "Dazed and Confused" instead. And then the funniest part was that Bruce called me a refusenik!

He didn't start singing "Dazed and Confused"?

No, he said, "Okay, I think we gotta change this bit…" *[Laughs]* And so it might have put a stop to the introductions.

Do you have any sense of what fans can expect next in terms of E Street Band activity, or are you sort of waiting to hear?

I'm waiting to hear. I have no idea. You know, Clarence is living in China! Last I heard, anyway. I haven't spoken with him in a while, but he married a gal from China, and I guess they were having trouble getting her into this country, and so he said "Okay," and he moved to China. So, go figure that one out!

Well, that makes for some interesting logistics.

Yeah, everybody's kind of spread out. But it's worked in the past. Bruce is ready, he's got material all ready—I know he's having a good time on this acoustic tour, but when he's ready to do something with the band, I'm sure everybody will be up for it. I just hope that everybody's healthy enough. I think we've been very fortunate. Everybody has been able to do it, nobody is a casualty. That's wonderful.

No kidding—it's pretty unique. And anyway, it seems like you're busy enough in the meantime.

Oh, yeah. I've got two young kids, too, so that keeps you busy, too.

How old are your kids?

Seven and nine. I was 47 or 48 when Olivia was born—everybody I know my age has grandchildren my kids' age! I waited until I had time to be around—I didn't really expect to be touring any more at that point. In '96, when she was born, I thought pretty much that was the end of my touring days. But it's worked out, and I've had a lot of time with them. It's wonderful—it changes your life.

Have they come on the road with you at all?

Yeah, when they were younger. My daughter, she was three years old when the first reunion tour took place in '99, and I took her on the road with me.

Did she like seeing daddy on stage?

Yeah—it's kind of embarrassing sometimes when her friends say, like, "What's *your* daddy do?" "My daddy is a doctor." "My daddy is a… well, I don't know, he's a… rock star." *[Laughs]* But that's Nashville, too. You've got Delbert McClinton's kids at the same school, Ben Folds… it's a good community.

Obviously there's such a legendary tradition there—has being in Nashville inspired you in terms of being a songwriter? In that same *Backstreets* interview back in 1993, you were excited about writing songs—is that something that you've continued to pursue?

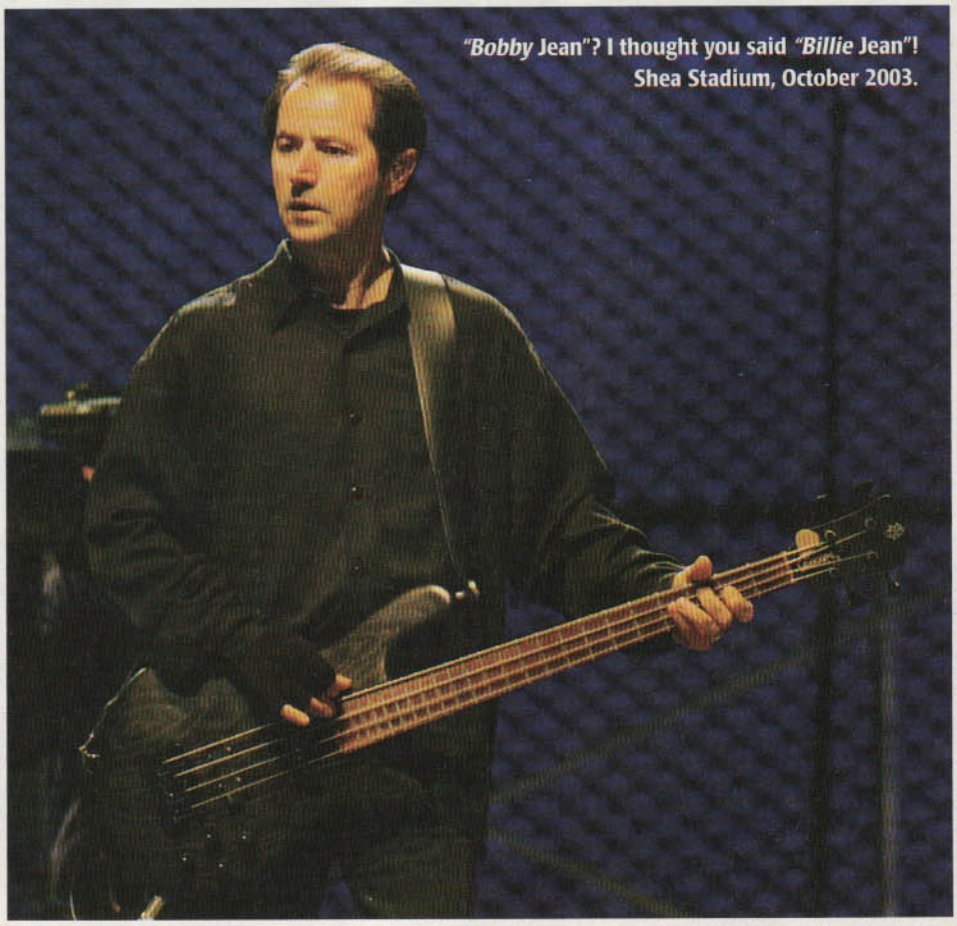
Well, I love the process. It's a little bit intimidating—I've always been intimidated to continue songwriting, being in the shadow of Bruce Springsteen. I kind of put that all on the shelf years ago. But in Nashville, *everybody* is a songwriter. The cab driver's a songwriter—everybody is a songwriter, see. It's expected. The fact is, I'm not that great at it. Some people, it just pours out of them; I have to work. And basically, I have to have a reason to do it. When I did an album with Southside a few years ago *[Messin' With the Blues,* produced by Tallent], Southside and I co-wrote a lot of that together. There was a reason to sit down and do the work. And I've written a few things with friends that are on their albums. But other than that, I've written a lot of things that just wind up being—you know, you demo them and say, "Oh, this would be good for Travis Tritt," or whoever. But being involved in the music business and plugging songs and all of that, it's pretty much another exercise in futility. And I have enough of those in my life.

So yeah, I've got a bunch of songs that I've written over the years. But I haven't really had any big success as a songwriter, and I haven't really pursued it. It's not the number one thing I do. And yet I do enjoy doing it when there's a reason to. I'm not a singer. I'm not looking to do a solo album, and I'm not ambitious enough to go out there and fight every other songwriter in Nashville trying to give whoever is the big guy at that moment the next big cut. And yet, like I say, I've got a handful of those, and I'm with Bug [Music publishing] and they show them around every once in a while. So, I guess it's not my number one priority, even though I do enjoy it.

In terms of what you did for the *To: Kate* record, it seems like that's a great way to put all your abilities to use: you're playing bass, you're arranging, producing, you're behind the scenes putting it all together. Was that a pretty satisfying thing to do?

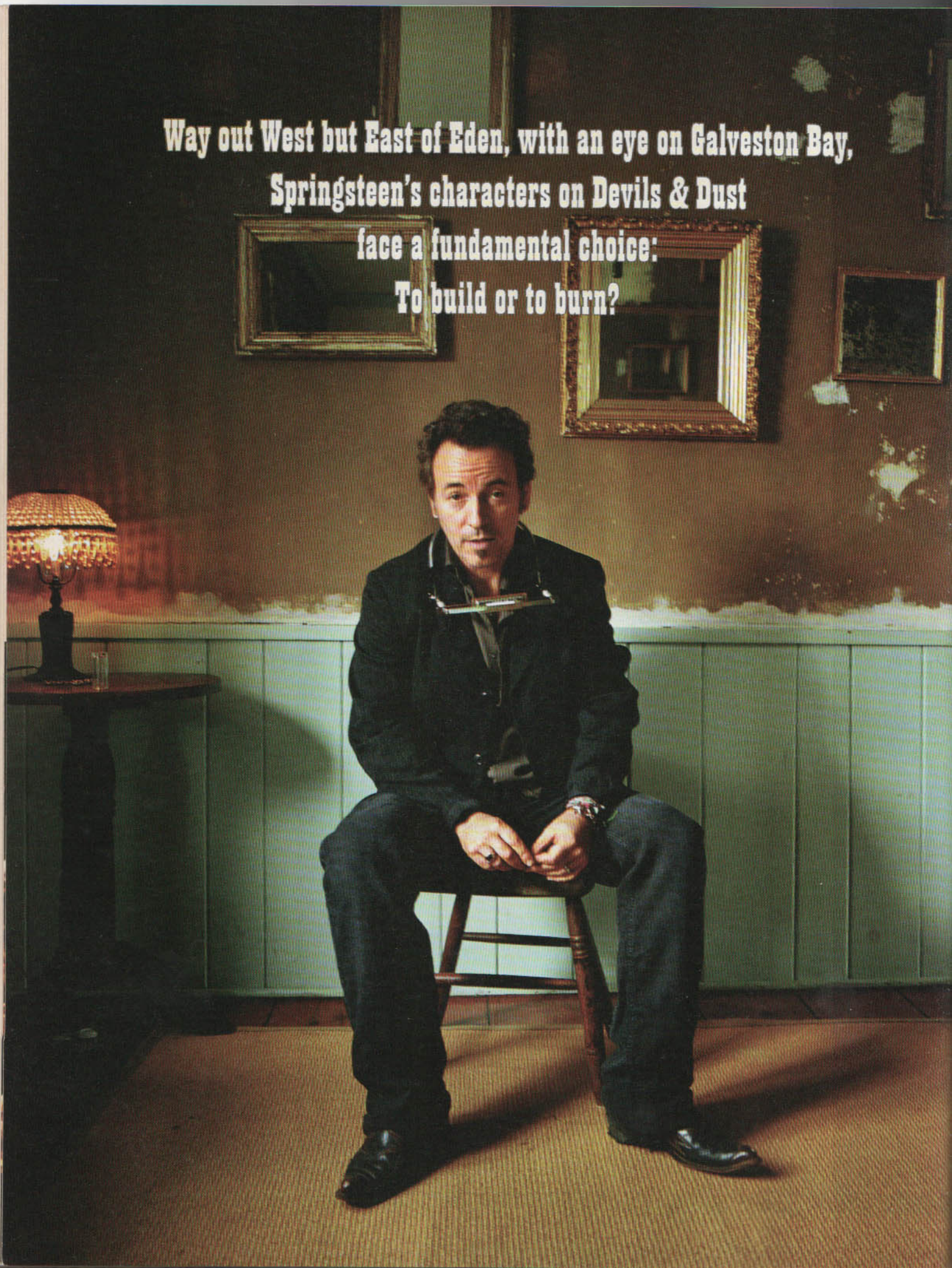
Yeah, and I guess the truth is, I need something to motivate me that's bigger than myself. This kind of thing, it's a big job. And so I need something like that to make me do it—and it needed to be done. So I'm happy that we were able to put it together, and now I'm just hoping that we can get the word out there. There are a lot of good causes, especially with [Hurricane] Katrina and all that. People have enough other people asking them for their money. I'm hoping that people will buy this because they like it, as well as for the cause—that people will hear it, like it, and want to have it as part of their Christmas.

For more information or to order the To: Kate *CD, visit www.forkatessake.org.*



***"Bobby* Jean"? I thought you said *"Billie* Jean"! Shea Stadium, October 2003.**

DEBRA L. ROTHENBERG PHOTO


Way out West but East of Eden, with an eye on Galveston Bay,
Springsteen's characters on Devils & Dust
face a fundamental choice:
To build or to burn?

WITH THESE HANDS

BY CHRISTOPHER PHILLIPS

On his right hand Billy'd tattooed the word love *and on his left hand was the word fear*
And in which hand he held his fate was never clear

—"Cautious Man"

I walk this road, with a hammer and a fiery lantern
With this hand I've built, and with this I've burned

—"Leah"

Ten years ago, much like 2005, Bruce Springsteen was going it alone. Recording at home in California in the spring of 1995, soon after the release of *Greatest Hits*, he began to flesh out a vision for his upcoming solo album. He began by revisiting "The Ghost of Tom Joad," a song he actually wrote for the E Street Band's studio reunion; the bleak tale of the dispossessed "didn't feel right" as a rock song, he said, and he had decided to save it. This would be something of a habit.

From there, "Highway 29" and "Straight Time"—two songs with stories that roll on relentlessly and inevitably toward destruction—came quickly. Toward the end of the songwriting process, "frightened by [the] implications" of the book *Journey to Nowhere*, Springsteen wrote "Youngstown" and "The New Timer," some of the darkest narratives of his career. Estranged from family, community, and country, the narrators of both "The New Timer" and "Youngstown" finally reject goodness and heaven itself by the end of each song, in two of his most chilling closing stanzas this side of *Nebraska*.

By the summer of 1995, Springsteen had *The Ghost of Tom Joad* almost ready to go. He finally reached a point where he needed only one more song, and it became clear that he needed something redemptive, to balance the darkness.

"At the time I was looking for—maybe in my own life as well as for the record—looking for some little bit of *light*," Springsteen recalled in concert on the subsequent *Tom Joad* tour. "I had written 'Across the Border,' but I knew that I wanted a song that had sort of a real-life miracle. The hard kind—not some ideal dream of some world that is maybe yet to come, but something that's real. That can happen any day, any place. Where somebody holds fate in their hands and does the right thing—and in doing so, forever changes themselves. Somebody decides not to compound the brutality that's already out there and in doing so, changes himself and changes the part of the world that he touches."

That final song for *The Ghost of Tom Joad* was "Galveston Bay." Set on the Gulf Coast of Texas, the tensions between native fishermen and the Vietnamese refugees who also cast their nets in the water are played out in the story of Billy Sutter and Le Bin Son. With Le having killed two Texans in self-defense, and Billy out for revenge in a culture of prejudice and hate, it's yet another song with an inexorable pull toward ruin. But it turns on a dime, as Billy, in the shadows,

DANNY CLINCH PHOTO

"stuck his knife..."—and here a moment of horror seems inevitable, the tragic ending playing itself out in the listener's mind before Bruce finishes the line—"...into his pocket / Took a breath and let him pass." In a moment, Billy chooses not only to not lay another soul to waste, but also to save his own—and those of his wife and son, too.

Billy's choice, of course, was Springsteen's choice. In *Songs*, Bruce revealed that the song "originally had a more violent ending. But it began to feel false." He continued, "I wanted a character who is driven to do the wrong thing, but does not. He instinctively refuses to add to the violence in the world around him. With great difficulty and against his own grain he transcends his circumstances. He finds the strength and grace to save himself and the part of the world he touches."

And so, with that choice, "Galveston Bay" became the final piece of the puzzle for *The Ghost of Tom Joad*. But it wasn't an endpoint. Springsteen continued to write new songs even as he toured for *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, and "Galveston Bay" became a gateway to his next batch of songs—the songs that became the bulk of *Devils & Dust*.

Springsteen's post-"Galveston" writings, as he started to play them on the *Joad* tour, were all about light: songs like "It's the Little Things That Count," "Pilgrim in the Temple of Love" "Sell It and They Will Come," "There Will Never Be Any Other For Me But You," all seemed to be written solely to bring some levity to the show.

But as the tour continued, and Springsteen continued to write, what came out were meditations and variations on the crux of "Galveston Bay." Songs not marked by the oppressive forces of "Sinaloa Cowboys," "Youngstown," or "Balboa Park" that drag characters down, seemingly without choice, but about characters who have held fate in their hands and steered themselves either into the darkness or into the light.

On October 16, 1996, he debuted the first of the *D&D* songs-to-be, "Long Time Comin'"—above all, about a man inspired to make a change. What's been a long time comin', after all? Not a family—the singer and Rosie already have two kids, with a third one on the way. It's the "fresh map" that the singer has worked to make: the decision to bury his old soul, the choice not to pass along the sins of the father, this moment of conscious resolution: "I ain't gonna fuck it up this time." There's a darkness on the edge of this song, suggested by the worlds contained in that "this time." It's a "happy" song, but only because the singer has confronted his past and made a choice to transcend. Introducing the song in Paris on 5/25/97, on the *Joad* tour, Springsteen said, "This is a song mainly about sort of not doing unto others as was done unto you, which is a pretty good lesson to learn. Our kids come along, and you have the chance to sort of do it differently. To correct or change some of the things about the way that you were brought up. And that's really what this song is about, I guess. It's about trying not to do unto others as has been done unto you. The bad stuff anyway."

Billy Sutter would understand.

Soon after "Long Time Comin'," Springsteen debuted "The Hitter"—in many ways the flipside, as a man sabotages himself and his success and winds up estranged from community and family. Playing a *Devils & Dust* show in Hamburg in 2005, he had this to say about "The Hitter," a centerpiece of this tour: "We carry the seeds of our own destruction. And I guess that's what this song is about. You know, God set us up so that we build with this hand, and we burn with this one."

Nearly a decade earlier, on tour in 1996, Springsteen had introduced "Galveston Bay" with these strikingly similar words: "a song about somebody who changes themselves in one particular moment... about the battle between that will to live and the will for destruction."

It's that particular internal battle that informs *Devils & Dust*. Much as the search for one more song for *Human Touch* led to the full *Lucky Town* album, "Galveston Bay"—that "one more" song for *Tom Joad*—led to another album's worth of material. It just took the better part of a decade to get this one out.

While he premiered no other songs in live performance on the *Tom Joad* tour, Springsteen continued to write, and when he returned home in 1997 from that year-and-a-half-long trek, he brought with him a bevy of new songs written on the road. "I wrote a lot of this music *[on Devils & Dust]* after those shows, when I'd go back to my hotel room," he told *Rolling Stone's* Brian Hiatt earlier this year. "I still had my voice, because I hadn't sung over a rock band all night. I'd go home and make up my stories."

Following "Galveston Bay," "Long Time Comin'," and "The Hitter," those stories included "Leah," which actually uses the line, "With this hand I've built, and with this I've burned"; "Black Cowboys," in which Rainey Williams chooses to build, to escape the destruction around him and set out to create a new life. And on the other hand (so to speak), "Reno" and "All I'm Thinkin' About," with characters who, like the Hitter, have sabotaged themselves.

"I wrote a lot of this stuff during and immediately after the *Tom Joad* tour," Springsteen later told the *Boston Globe's* Steve Morse, "And because I had such a great time on that tour, I thought, well, maybe I'll do another one and continue to play acoustic."

As 1997 wore on, Springsteen's intent circulated among fans, and an acoustic follow-up to *Joad* seemed imminent. Initially, Springsteen demoed the songs at home, with engineer Toby Scott. As Jon Pareles wrote in the *New York Times* in 2005, "Mr. Springsteen recorded nearly all of the songs in a few days, nearly a decade ago, sitting with his guitar in the living room of his farmhouse in New Jersey, doing just a take or two."

As he worked on these recordings in late '97 and early '98, the buzz was that Springsteen had brought in additional players, as he had for *Tom Joad*. Fans got a glimpse of a working unit when Springsteen and a band filmed some performances in January 1998 for a *Rolling Stone* television special *(Where It's At: Rolling Stone's State of the Union,* which aired a few months later on ABC). At New York's Sony Studios that January, Springsteen was backed on "Across the

Border" and "The Ghost of Tom Joad" by returning players from the *Joad* sessions: Danny Federici (keyboards), Jim Hanson (bass), Gary Mallaber (drums), and Marty Rifkin (pedal steel). Many took this congregation as another indication that Springsteen was readying, for lack of a better term, *Joad II*. (While Brendan O'Brien and Steve Jordan later wound up recording the bass and drum parts, Federici and Rifkin's contributions did make the final *Devils & Dust* album.)

Then came *Tracks*. Sorting through a vast backlog of material to compile the box set for release later in 1998, the new songs were set aside; inspired by those older recordings, as well as by his approaching Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction, Springsteen brought the E Street Band back together. A virtually non-stop burst of E Street activity would carry Springsteen through to the end of 2003. As Springsteen put it succinctly to Morse in the *Boston Globe*: "Then we started to work with the band again, and four or five years went by. So I had this stuff sort of sitting and waiting to be addressed."

In 2004, after laying low for a year following the *Rising* tour (Springsteen told the *Plain Dealer*'s John Soeder in May 2005: "I had a year off. Patti worked on her record and went touring. So I spent a lot of time with the kids."), Springsteen decided to get back to work. As he told Soeder, "On this particular record, the main thing I was looking for was just the best record I had at that moment.... I said, 'Gee, I have good music that I was interested in before I started to work again with the E Street Band.'... I had all these songs that were holding up well. I was interested in those characters."

Before he could revisit them, Springsteen had one more stop on E Street, supporting John Kerry's bid for the U.S. Presidency with the Vote for Change tour in the fall of 2004. The last song written for the album, "Devils & Dust," nearly came into play—Springsteen planned to use the song to open his VFC shows until he worked up his instrumental guitar arrangement of "The Star-Spangled Banner." After the election, he tapped his *The Rising* producer to help him finish what he'd started by fleshing out those 1997 demos. Pareles writes, "[H]e gathered the old recordings and worked with the producer Brendan O'Brien so that the accompaniments—a slide guitar, a string section, distant voices—float up from within like phantoms."

As for the newly written "Devils & Dust," O'Brien helped nail down an arrangement that worked, something Springsteen had been struggling with since the spring of 2003. As Hiatt reported in *Rolling Stone*, "Springsteen tried recording the title track as both an angry rock song and an acoustic ballad, but it took the help of producer O'Brien... to bridge the gap. 'Brendan found something that put it in the middle, where it picks up a little instrumental beef as it goes,' says Springsteen. O'Brien took a similar approach to the rest of the album, helping Springsteen ditch *Joad*'s low-fi sound and minimal arrangements for a more fleshed-out approach." But they were careful not to flesh it out too much, as Springsteen also told Hiatt: "I wanted to keep it raw. I think that's what's slipped out of a lot of modern country music, that certain sort of chill-to-the-bone sound."

Here's to your good looks, baby.

In some ways *Devils & Dust* is lyrically an even darker album than *Joad*, with its constant evocations of dust, bones, and moonlight. That darkness is leavened, however, not only by the music—that chill-to-the-bone sound appears now and then, but on the whole it's brighter, more up-tempo and musically compelling than *Joad*—but also by those moments of choice. The songs' characters reach for a better life, a better world: the singer of "Leah," deciding two hearts are better than one; Rainey Williams of "Black Cowboys," who uses the tools that his mother has given him to start a new life as an adult. In "Maria's Bed," the singer chooses to find his salvation in the pleasures of this world, not the next. Jesus accepts his fate and, rather than despairing, chooses words of comfort for his mother. In "All the Way Home," even a second choice, well, that's all right. When things don't go so well, as in "Reno," "The Hitter," and "All I'm Thinkin' About," we're rarely looking at characters caught powerless in the crossfire of government policy or oppressive social forces. Their regret, their sins, are their own.

Even "Matamoros Banks" plays out a choice, as the character strives for a better life—he chooses hope rather than despair. He's certainly limited by circumstance, as Springsteen's in-concert call for a "humane immigration policy" stresses. But all of Springsteen's characters—and all of us—are limited by circumstance in some way; and all have choices, however limited those choices may seem. "Matamoros Banks" focuses on what that character chooses to do in his search for a better world, and—in the song's later verses, and in its prequel, "Across the Border"—finds hope in that choice, despite the consequences.

To that end, it's the characters' internal lives that dominate the record. Though nearly as many songs on *Tom Joad* were in the first person, by and

large they are more strictly narrative-based: this happened, then this happened. *Devils & Dust* takes us inside. Springsteen hit on this when he told Pareles, "Most of the songs on *[Devils & Dust]*, you're listening to someone think." And it's true: far from the straight reportage of *Joad*, there are more dreams and reveries on the new album than in any David Lynch film. The title track's horrific dream of blood and bone; the "Reno" john's heartbreaking flashback to the Valle de dos Rios. In "Silver Palomino," "In my dreams bareback I ride"; in "Matamoros Banks," "I sleep and dream of holding you in my arms again." And with those internal dialogues and glimpses into their conscious and unconscious thoughts, we clearly see motivations, struggles, and regrets—characters not swept up in events beyond their control, but rather making decisions to act and facing the consequences of those actions.

In Portland on August 10, 2005, Springsteen offered this variation on his introduction to "The Hitter": "I always figure we carry with us the seeds of creation—the possibility to build good things and make good things—and, also, the seeds of our own destruction. And that is part of the merry human package. I think that was the deal we made with God, supposedly—the whole 'East of Eden' thing."

Yes, sooner or later, it all comes back to Steinbeck, and what Springsteen said in passing that night is a key to the new album. What 1939's *The Grapes of Wrath* was to *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, 1952's *East of Eden* is to *Devils & Dust*. From small town prostitutes to young soldiers in battle, boys growing up without their mother, and fathers trying to break a cycle of sin, you'll find echoes of *East of Eden* all over *Devils & Dust*. But the greatest influence from the Steinbeck novel is its meditation on the ongoing battle between good and evil in each of us: the archetype of Cain and Abel, our potential for creation and destruction, and the idea of free will allowing us to conquer sin, evil, and ignorance—the power of the choice.

In "Devils & Dust," the narrator faces one of the hardest choices of all: "What if what you do to survive kills the things you love?" Much as that character's situation seems untenable, that question is, at root, a choice—and it has a striking real-life parallel.

In May 2004, after filing for conscientious objector status, Staff Sgt. Camilo Mejia faced court martial for his refusal to return to combat in Iraq. He was sentenced to a year in prison on May 21, 2004, and released on February 15, 2005. During that time—after Springsteen wrote "Devils & Dust" but before the song was released, after Springsteen wrote "Fear's a powerful thing" and all the rest but before Mejia could have heard it—the Sergeant wrote these words:

> "To those who have called me a coward, I say that they are wrong, and that without knowing it, they are also right. They are wrong when they think that I left the war for fear of being killed. I admit that fear was there, but there was also the fear of killing innocent people, the fear of putting myself in a position where to survive means to kill, there was the fear of losing my soul in the process of saving my body, the fear of losing myself to my daughter, to the people who love me, to the man I used to be, the man I wanted to be. I was afraid of waking up one morning to realize my humanity had abandoned me."

That "What if" in Springsteen's song isn't the closed door of an impossible situation, it's just a hard-as-hell question that could be asked by any number of characters on the album. In "Matamoros Banks," the narrator tries to preserve the things he loves—and winds up sacrificing his own survival in the process. As Springsteen often said on tour during his performance of "Jesus Was an Only Son," "Our choices gain their value by the things that we sacrifice. You choose something and you give up other things—that's what gives our choices value and meaning."

The concept of the choice as key to our salvation in *East of Eden*, one of the main themes in the book, comes in its discussion of God's words to Cain in *Genesis* 4:7. As Steinbeck's character Lee explains, Cain (and by extension, humankind) is not *promised* that he will conquer sin, as the American Standard translation of the Bible suggests, nor *ordered* to do so, as in the King James, but—going back to the original Hebrew, *timshel*—offered a choice. "[The] Hebrew word, the word *timshel*—'Thou mayest'—that gives a choice," says Lee.

> "'Thou mayest'! Why, that makes a man great, that gives him stature with the gods, for in his weakness and his filth and his murder of his brother he has still the great choice. He can choose his course and fight it through and win...
>
> "It is easy out of laziness, out of weakness, to throw oneself into the lap of deity, saying, 'I couldn't help it; the way was set.' But think of the glory of the choice! That makes a man a man. A cat has no choice, a bee must make honey....
>
> "I have a new love for that glittering instrument, the human soul. It is a lovely and unique thing in the universe. It is always attacked and never destroyed—because 'Thou mayest.'"

The fate of Springsteen's characters on *Devils & Dust* has not been written in stone; like all of us, in Steinbeck's view, they've had the freedom to choose their path. In some cases we see them facing the choice, in others we see the aftermath, for better or worse. Sometimes they build, sometimes they burn. As Lee also says of *timshel*, "It might be the most important word in the world. That says that the way is open. That throws it right back on a man. For if 'Thou mayest'—it is also true that 'Thou mayest not.'"

Tell it to the Hitter, trapped in his self-created wreckage of a life.

Bruce, on this tour, put it this way: "I suppose that was the price, that was the whole deal when we got tossed out of that Garden of Eden: You're just free to fuck up if you want to," he said in Gothenberg on June 23, 2005. "My take on it was, that's the better deal in the long run—you know, what would life be without its fuck-ups? I don't know if that's the way God planned it, but that's the way He let it be.

"But you gotta be careful."

THE DEVIL'S IN THE DETAILS

Devils & Dust song-by-song. By Christopher Phillips

Devils & Dust

Like "The Ghost of Tom Joad," "Devils & Dust" is a song that was originally intended for the E Street Band but saved to lead off a solo album and anchor its themes. While the troubling sentiment "The highway is alive tonight / But nobody's kiddin' nobody about where it goes" echoed throughout the *Tom Joad* album, here "What if what you do to survive kills the things you love?" is the question on nearly everyone's mind. "Devils & Dust" is the album's overture, and its openness to interpretation allows it to resonate with the rest of the record; as Springsteen told the Associated Press' Larry McShane: "It works as a metaphor for all the music underneath it, the individual stories of people wrestling with their demons."

Timeline: This was the last song written for *Devils & Dust*, composed in the spring of 2003. During the run-up to the war in Iraq that March, Springsteen was touring for *The Rising* with the E Street Band. On 3/2/03, he added "War" to the set as an opener. Toward the end of the month, as the first bombs fell in Iraq, the tour was in Australia, where Springsteen underlined the message by leading into "War" with an acoustic "Born in the U.S.A." That pairing opened four of the five shows Down Under; it wasn't much of a mystery what was on his mind.

By the time the *Rising* tour returned to North America less than two weeks later, Springsteen had a new song to sing. At the soundcheck for the 4/9/03 Sacramento show, Springsteen tried out a new number with the band; based on the overheard chorus, word circulated of a song called "Devils and Dust." Springsteen and the E Street Band continued to try the song at soundcheck—including at the very next show, 4/11/03 in Vancouver, BC, and in 2004, in preparation for the Vote for Change tour—but they never performed it for an audience.

Alternate versions: As soundchecked in 2003, the song sounds very similar to its released version, in terms of the melody, the chorus, and the first and last verses. A vastly different second verse, however, shows the song still in its early stages: "It's a world of blood and money/A world of greed and lust/It's a world of smoke and mirrors/of devils and dust." This early draft presents a more general overview in some ways, as Springsteen would later refine the song to reflect a harrowing, battlefield-level soldier's point of view; however, a phrase like "It's a world of earth and oil" pointed much more specifically at Iraq than the finished version. Other early lyrics have the narrator addressing "baby" rather than "Bobbie"; describing fear as turning "hard steel to rust," and adding, "Hate's a powerful thing/Fills your heart with fire and blood."

Musically, the 2003 soundcheck version sounds even more like "Blood Brothers" than the released track. According to *Rolling Stone*, Springsteen also "tried recording the title track as both an angry rock song and an acoustic ballad."

The *VH1 Storytellers* performance of this song was officially released on DVD in September 2005, featuring Springsteen explaining the song line-by-line.

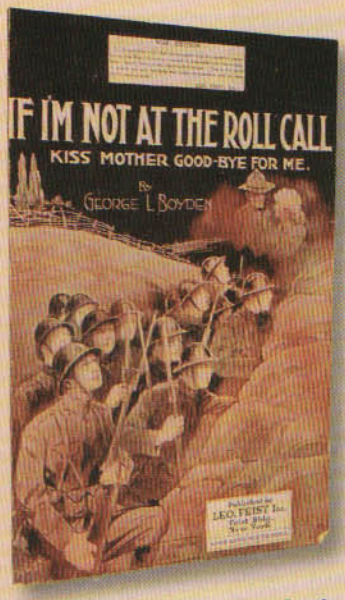
Roll call: We're introduced here to the rhythm section that holds down about half of the album: producer Brendan O'Brien on bass and Steve Jordan on drums. Previously, Jordan worked on Patti Scialfa's *23rd Street Lullaby;* he co-produced that 2004 album with her and played on 11 of its 12 songs (including three songs with Springsteen). O'Brien, who produced *The Rising*, only played on three of its tracks; on this album he plays on twice that many. Also returning from *The Rising* (on "Countin' on a Miracle" and "You're Missing") is the Nashville String Machine, featured on half the tracks on *Devils*.

Video: In addition to the solo acoustic performance filmed by Danny Clinch on the DVD side of the DualDisc, an official video was released for "Devils & Dust." Also directed by Clinch, the video has aired on various video networks including VH1 and CMT (and is viewable in the iTunes Music Store). The clip was filmed onstage at the Paramount Theatre in Asbury Park on 3/30/05, with Bruce playing to an empty house. As in the videos for "Streets of Philadelphia" and "Brilliant Disguise," he performs a live vocal over a backing track.

Dylan & Dust: "We're a long, long way from home, Bobbie," Springsteen sings, and one might imagine the compatriot he's singing to as none other than Bob Dylan. Springsteen alludes to Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind," described by *Rolling Stone* as "the most famous protest song ever written," as he sings "I feel a dirty wind blowin.'" In its refrain, "Devils & Dust" also has repeated echoes of "With God on Our Side," an explicit anti-war song from *The Times They Are a Changin'* which ends, "If God's on our side / He'll stop the next war." Like Dylan's song, Springsteen's gets at the irony and slipperiness of the idea of having God on one's side, particularly as a justification for violence and war. "Got God on my side," he read, going through the song line-by-line at *Storytellers*, adding, "Who does not?"

What's it all about?: "It is basically a song about a soldier's point of view in Iraq," Springsteen told *Rolling Stone*'s Brian Hiatt. "But it kind of opens up to a lot of other interpretations." To leave it open, Springsteen has at times been cagey about the setting of the song—most particularly at the *VH1 Storytellers* performance, in which he went through the song line-by-line without ever mentioning the words *soldier* or *war*. But he did note the U.S. invasion of Iraq as the genesis of the song, describing it as "a story about being placed into a situation where your choices are untenable—and the price of that conflict is in blood and in spirit."

Bruce Says 1: "I was interested in the soldier's point of view... you have to make these incredible life-and-death decisions, and you have to make them



immediately, then you have to live with them for the rest of your life.... The Iraq war continues to be a very confusing mess, and I've lived through that before as a younger man.... So far, it's gotten a variety of responses. There are some people it has made angry.... I've seen both sides of the coin on it."[1]

Bruce Says 2: "[Our soldiers are] put in a situation of making difficult and impossible choices that I believe even the best training can prepare you for only so much—which is why when our soldiers came home from all the wars that have been fought as long as I've been alive, there was an enormous period of attempting to readjust and to sort through the things they were asked to do. That's what I was trying to get at."[2]

Bruce Says 3: "What moved me the most was the idea of young kids stationed at a checkpoint, and you've got a very, very short period of time where you have to decide about the car that's driving towards you. Whether it's an innocent family or whether it's your death coming—and you have to decide right now. And there's so little room for error, and the error that you make is so very final. It has to take a big piece of you, you know?

"That, and the idea that in the process of defending ourselves against our enemies, we're in danger of subverting our own ideals, which we've seen go on with the erosion of civil rights and lack of access to attorneys and the flying off to other countries to be interrogated. The personal and the political kind of collides in the middle of the song. And, you know, I don't try to get real polemical about it or anything. That seems to be the wrong way to go about it. I just try to present the human issues and what we're risking. That's my interest when I go to write something like that."[3]

Bruce Says 4: "It was just something I came up with, a title, 'Devils & Dust'... What am I seeing? Am I seeing what's really there, or am I seeing my own inner demons or devils? It's a land of moral uncertainty and consequently it has turned the U.S. into its mirror image by the responsibility we all have as citizens for the actions of our government."[4]

All the Way Home

The whole song is a pitch. Like "Tougher Than the Rest," like "Let's Be Friends," it is, at its basic level, a come-on. It's from one been-around-the-block soul to another (she, at least, is divorced: "the shadow of that ring / that was on your finger"), so it's a song about second chances; but "All the Way Home" also gets at the way in which we, by necessity, "make do" with less-than-ideal choices—and that's not always a bad thing. "Maybe your first choice he's gone / Well that's all right."

Bruce Says 1: "A great barroom, second-chance, last, late-at-night, I've-had-enough-to-drink-everybody's-looking-pretty-*good* love song," Springsteen said on 4/21/05—introducing "Tougher Than the Rest," but he just as easily could have been talking about this one.

Timeline: As far as we know, this is the earliest composition on *Devils & Dust*. Springsteen originally wrote "All the Way Home" for Southside Johnny, contributing the song to Southside's 1991 album *Better Days* (also singing background and playing guitar and keyboards on the track). Bruce himself performed the song live a handful of times on the 1992-93 tour, including with Southside as guest on 8/7/92 (saying, "Here's a little tune I wrote for him... he hasn't thanked me enough for it yet, but he'll get around to it") and at the 3/23/93 Count Basie Theatre warm-up show.

As for when the *Devils & Dust* version was recorded, if you think this sounds like a '90s recording, you're probably right—at least to some extent. Many of the tracks on *Devils & Dust* were recorded shortly after the *Tom Joad* tour in 1997 and early 1998 and revisited to varying degrees later with Brendan O'Brien. Though the precise recording history remains unclear for most of the songs on the album, additional credits on this one point to a basic track recorded in the '90s with overdubs added in 2004 or '05 (see "Roll call" below).

Alternate version: "All the Way Home" is radically recast here; compared to the ballad version on *Better Days*, you might not recognize the song if you weren't paying attention to the lyric. The music alone, with the boom-thwack of the drums, creates a completely different tone. In addition to melody and tempo, there are lyric changes, too, and a completely different bridge best distinguishes the moods of each version. Southside sings, "Now there's things no one can rearrange / We both have yesterdays that we can't change." On *Devils & Dust*, the bridge instead cements the scene in the bar, namechecks the Rolling Stones, and emphasizes the pitch: "If you feel like dancin' / Baby, I'm askin'."

Lyric cross-check: Another lyric change comes in the first verse (which in the *Better Days* version concludes, "I know what it's like to have been so sure / Wake up and find it all gone"). On *Devils & Dust*, the verse shares a line with "My Beautiful Reward," which was written around the same time: "I know what it's like to have soared / And come crashin' like a drunk on a bar room floor."

Roll call: While O'Brien gets sole credit for most of the album's production, "All the Way Home" is one of two songs with production co-credited to Springsteen and his longtime producer Chuck Plotkin. Plotkin gets a piano credit as well. Also turning up here

Below: Scenes from the video for "All the Way Home."

is Marty Rifkin on steel guitar. Rifkin was part of sessions in the mid-'90s for *The Ghost of Tom Joad*, appearing on that album as well as playing with Bruce for the 1998 *Where It's At: Rolling Stone's State of the Union* ABC TV special. The presence of Plotkin and Rifkin here suggests that the bulk of this song was recorded in the '90s, with new additions from Jordan and O'Brien. O'Brien adds some of the album's most exotic instrumentation: tambora, sitar, and electric sarangi.

Video: Over the summer of 2005, a video for "All the Way Home" was viewable online. It was never released to music video television networks, and as it ultimately wasn't officially approved by Springsteen management, it was eventually removed from the internet. The clip featured pro-shot footage of Springsteen performing the song live on the *Devils & Dust* tour (and used the live acoustic audio track), intercut with film of him riding a horse.

Reno

In some ways "Reno" is a darker, raunchier spin on "Little Things That Count," an unreleased *Joad*-era song which takes place entirely in a bedroom, a woman taking off the narrator's clothes and getting down to business. In "Reno," of course, the woman is unquestionably a prostitute, and she goes farther than sticking her tongue in the narrator's mouth. But what really differentiates the two is the glimpse we're allowed into the mind of the narrator as he searches for sanctuary, trying to substitute this woman for another, and revealing a pain which we feel most achingly in the mid-song reverie, set somewhere "south of the border." As a memory of lost love, it's a heartbreaker, much like the final verse in "The River" ("But I remember us riding in my brother's car..."), lines from which would easily fit the character's situation in "Reno": "Now those memories come back to haunt me / They haunt me like a curse."

South of the border: Mexico? Or Guatemala? While a liner note says the Amatitlan is a "Central Mexican River," the lyric would actually seem to refer a Central American lake: Lake Amatitlan is located just south of Guatemala City. As for the Valle de dos Rios, well, it sounds generic enough—"Valley of Two Rivers"—but the only one of proper-noun significance is in southern Spain. Let's say the geography is less important than the narrative.

Video: The Danny Clinch-filmed acoustic performance appears on the DVD side of the DualDisc.

Bruce Says 1: "This is a song about not being able to handle real love, so you try something else—and that doesn't work out so good either, I guess." *(song intro—5/11/05, Chicago, IL)*

Bruce Says 2: "He's in this room with this proxy because he couldn't handle the real thing. The physicality, the sexual content of the song was important, because casual sex is kind of closing the book of you. It's ecstasy, and it's release. Sex with somebody you love is opening the book of you, which is always a risky and frightening read."[5]

Adult imagery: Nevada is the only state in which prostitution is legal. Though it is still outlawed in the larger counties (including Reno's Washoe County), "The Biggest Little City in the World" remains home to such frontier-town vice. Merely setting a song in a bedroom with a prostitute wouldn't be enough to get Springsteen's first warning label on the packaging; the frankness of the negotation, however—"Two hundred dollars straight in, two-fifty up the ass"—that'll do it. But it's not the first time Springsteen has been sexually explicit in his lyrics; see "Red Headed Woman" and "Leap of Faith" for some less-than-oblique metaphors, "The Fuse," "Cross My Heart," "Secret Garden," and the in-concert-only "Pilgrim in the Temple of Love" for even more direct lyrics. In the case of "Reno," Bruce told *Rolling Stone*, simply, "It's just what felt right for the song." It didn't feel right for Starbucks, who put the kibosh on carrying *Devils & Dust* in their stores, after learning the lyrics to this song. Early on the tour, Springsteen warned the crowd before performing it: "If you brought any young kids with you, it might be a nice time to check out those fine T-shirts we have on sale."

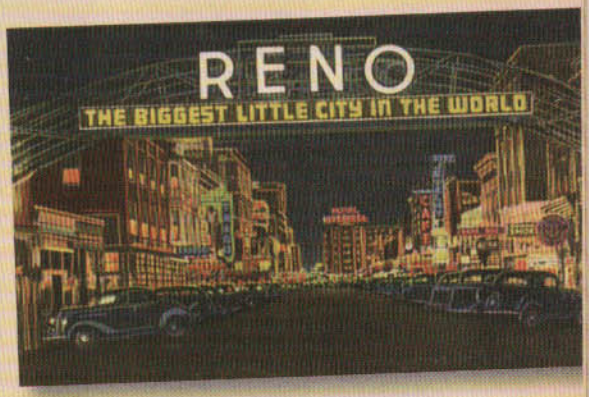
Bruce Says 3: "Well, that whole Starbucks thing was totally blown out of proportion. There were some discussions, but it wasn't a big deal. And I never took any offense. Hey, it was just a particular record that wasn't for them, and that was fine with me."[1]

Lyric cross-reference: "Reno" and "The Fuse" share not only a penchant for "afternoon delight," but a similar (and similarly violent) image: "The sun bloodied the sky and sliced through the hotel blinds" and "The room is burning with the noon sun."

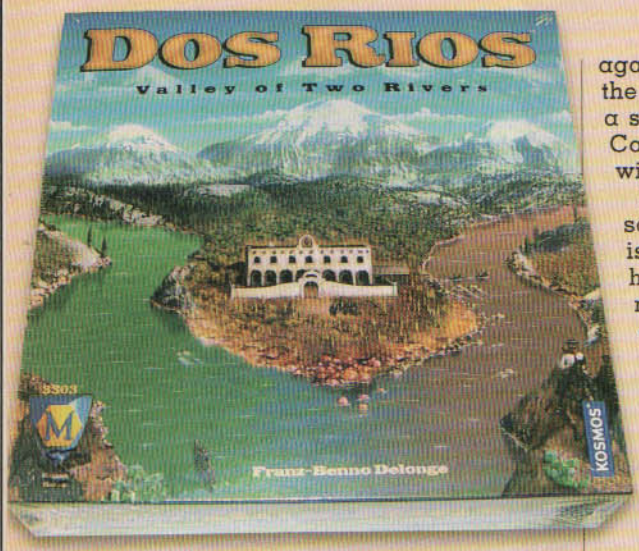
The narrator's realization, "Somehow all you ever need's, never really quite enough you know," recalls a line from "Dry Lightning": "She said, 'Ain't nobody can give nobody / What they really need anyway.'"

Blink and you'll miss it, but the name of the singer's lost love is "Maria," connecting this song to "Maria's Bed" and "Highway Patrolman" (Springsteen played all three in a row in Madrid, 6/2/05). It even recalls "In Freehold"—Maria Espinoza, named in that autobiographical song, was Springsteen's real-life first kiss.

But with all those Marias, it's a Louisa that might have the most connection with this song. In "The Line,"



after our narrator Carl loses his beloved Louisa, we're left with him drifting, from town to town and bar to bar, hoping to catch a glimpse of her. It's worth noting that, without exception, every time Springsteen performed "The Line" on the *Devils & Dust* tour to date, he followed it immediately with "Reno." It might as well be Carl in that room.



Bruce Says 4: "'Reno' continues to receive a lot of attention. The last line—'It wasn't the best I ever had, not even close'—got a laugh from the audience in Detroit, although I didn't take it as a punch line.... What I took that for was surprise. The cool thing about the first three shows [including two warm-up gigs in New Jersey] was people hadn't heard the record. They didn't know what was coming. So it was sort of neat....

"I remember when I first played ['Reno'] for Steve [Van Zandt, E Street Band guitarist]. He expected a different ending. It was a line that caught him by surprise, too. The funny thing is, since people have heard it, the surprise is kind of gone. It's a different experience. But it was interesting the first few nights."[2]

Long Time Comin'

Like "Happy" and "Real World," "Long Time Comin'" is one of those rare and long-awaited optimistic songs in Springsteen's canon, the singer finding happiness with a gal and warmth in the bosom of his family. Beyond that, it's a song about parents and children—in a basic, literal sense, a follow-up to "Living Proof," written just five years prior. But as its narrator struggles against the inheritance of the sins of the father, "Long Time Comin'" is really a spiritual sequel to "Adam Raised a Cain," finding that hot-blooded son with children of his own.

Bruce Says 1: "This is another song about men and women. This is one that's very unusual—this is a happy song *[laughs]*. I don't write too many happy songs, because I found out that the public in general doesn't like 'em, number one; and two, they come back and they bite you in the ass later, you know. You're real happy about something, and you'll see it comes back and gets you. "Take that, Mr. Happy Song Writer!" That does happen. But this is one I wrote in spite of myself. It's pretty happy—I don't wanna get too happy while I'm singing it. If I do, just somebody come up and slap me." *(song intro—5/25/97, Paris, France)*

Timeline: "This is a song I wrote shortly after I had our first kids," Springsteen said on the *Devils & Dust* tour on 5/10/05. (He continued: "I lived on the West Coast when we had our kids, so I set this song in the West. A nice place for a little rebirth and trying to get it right.") Springsteen debuted this song on the *Tom Joad* tour, at the Paramount Theatre in Denver on 10/16/96. While it was a fan favorite and performed repeatedly on the remainder of the tour, maybe Bruce thought it was too happy after all—"Long Time Comin'" wasn't heard again until its release on *Devils & Dust* (to which it was reportedly a late addition). Album credits suggest that the basic track was recorded in the '90s.

Roll call: Like "All the Way Home," this track was co-produced by Springsteen and Plotkin (along with O'Brien), featuring Rifkin on steel guitar. E Street Band members show up here for the first time on the album: Danny Federici, Patti Scialfa, and Soozie Tyrell.

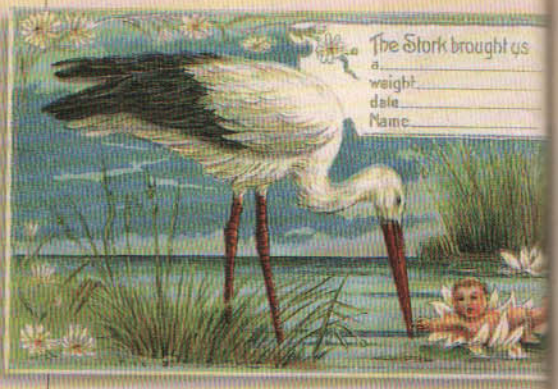
Alternate version: The album cut is the first time "Long Time Comin'" has been heard in a band arrangement, with backing vocals, as opposed to the solo-acoustic version played on tour in 1996-'97; lyrically, the two are identical. In performance in 2005, however, Springsteen continued to refine the lyric. After joking at several summer shows that he should have written the last line as "I ain't gonna fuck it up *too bad* this time," he did change the line in performance to *"I hope I don't* fuck it up this time." (One thing he hasn't changed is the mispronunciation of *Orion*. Call it poetic license.)

Video: The Danny Clinch-filmed acoustic performance appears on the DVD side of the DualDisc.

Lyric cross-check: "Adam Raised a Cain" is the main reference point here, as "Long Time Comin'" spits in the face of that song's "You know it's never over, it's relentless as the rain." Compare "You're born into this life paying for the sins of somebody else's past" with "Well, if I had one wish in this godforsaken world, kids / It'd be that your sins would be your own."

And then there's Rosie—the "little girl" from "Rosalita" all grown up? Weirdly, this seems to be a Neil Diamond reference as well, with "me and you, Rosie, cracklin' like crossed wires" perhaps a nod to Diamond's 1970 number-one hit "Cracklin' Rosie." Well, she *does* got the way to make him happy. You never know—producer Rick Rubin recently said of Diamond, "He was Springsteen before Springsteen."

Bruce Says 2: "My kids are at an age where they've realized, of course, that I am not perfect. Damn, I hate that. They're quite a ways past that age over the past few years, and I'm often a buffoon-like figure to them..... I'm the Dad and I sing them silly songs, you know, 'he's a silly man,' but they like me anyway. And I suppose I should grow up



and get a real job. But I'm also past the point of thinking I'm not gonna make some of the same mistakes that my folks made with me. Who the hell did I think I was? *[Laughs]* But kids are great, because they do give you second chances, to kind of sort out the stuff from your childhood, and we honor our parents by holding on to the good things and setting down the things that may not have went so well for us. That's what this song is about." *(song intro—4/21/05, Asbury Park, NJ)*

Bruce Says 3: "I like the idea of writing songs *for* my kids, but I don't know if I'd want to write songs *about* them. It's enough for them to be my kids and it's enough for me being their dad. We have our hands full with the real-world version of it. But it's all there. You can't spend 14 years with children and not have it come through your music in some fashion."[6]

Black Cowboys

The first of the mother/son songs, this is the most *Joad*-like narrative on the record. This story-song is one of only two third-person songs on *Devils & Dust* ("Jesus Was an Only Son" is the other), and despite its AABBCCDD rhyme scheme, the lyric is printed as prose. ("Reno" is the only other lyric in Springsteen's canon to be printed that way.) Rainey Willams, a boy who joins a slim group of Springsteen characters with surnames (e.g. Joe Roberts, Catherine LeFevre), loses his mother to the drugs and crime of his New York neighborhood. Rainey sets out to make a new life for himself—to escape his toxic surroundings and, essentially, make the journey from child to adult. This is one of the few songs on the album that is set somewhere other than the West—but that's where Rainey's dreams are, and that's where he heads.

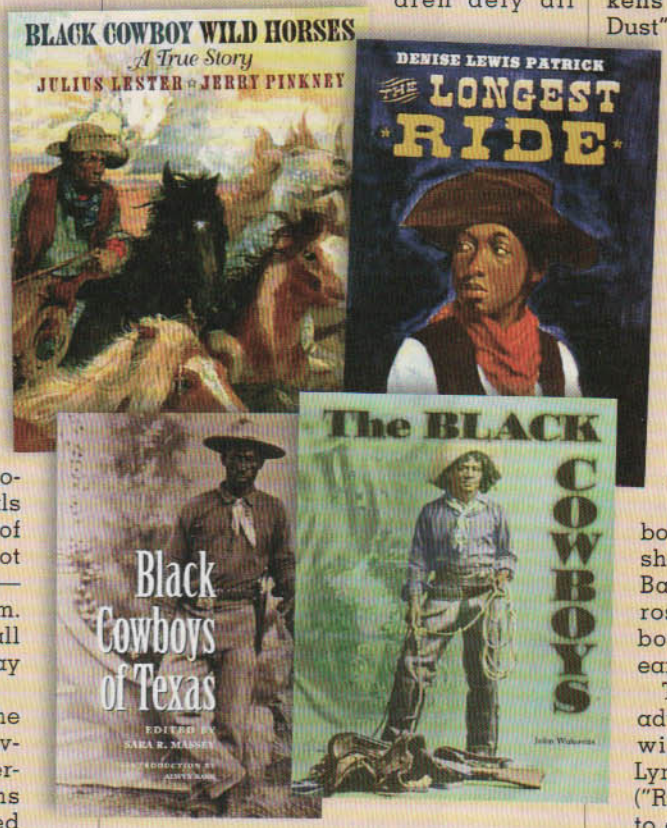
Bruce Says 1: "I kind of combined my love of westerns and—it's a thing where you still pick up the papers every week and somebody, in our inner cities, (is) innocently shot. And I came across the photos of those street-side memorials with the flowers and pictures of somebody who died on that spot and I wrote this particular song—a story about a boy and his mom. His mom is all he has, and he's all she has, and he loses her halfway through the song.

To keep him off the streets she starts showing these western movies and he ends up in the afternoons watching these westerns and becomes sort of enchanted with that whole idea." *(song intro—4/25/05, Detroit, MI)*

Bruce Says 2: "I've always felt deeply American, and I believe that we carry all of American geography within us. Everybody carries a little bit of the south, and the plains, either because we've read about it, or we've seen it in movies, or we've been there. These are things that encompass our Americanness, and I was interested in containing those things in my work....

"Musicians, writers and filmmakers are drawn, by aesthetic or commercial or deep psychological reasons, to choose a certain type of geography that they go into and explore. Whether it's Martin Scorsese with Little Italy or John Cheever with the suburbs of Long Island, they create these worlds that are half-real and half-fantasy."[7]

Inspiration: Much of *The Ghost of Tom Joad* riffed on things Springsteen had been reading at the time, from *L.A. Times* articles to the book *Journey to Nowhere;* "Black Cowboys" was inspired by Jonathan Kozol's 1995 book *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation.* The book focuses specifically on Mott Haven—named in the first line of this song as Rainey's home. Mott Haven is a neighborhood in the South Bronx, New York's poorest, roughly two-thirds Hispanic and one third black. The *Library Journal* writes: "Kozol describes a neighborhood ravaged by drugs, violence, hunger, AIDS, and antipathy but also one where children defy all



the stereotypes. In the South Bronx, where the median income is $7,600 a year and everything breaks down, Kozol reveals that the one thing that has remained resilient is the children."

Bruce Says 3: "There's a fellow named Jonathon Kozol who wrote some beautiful books about children in the inner city. One is called *Amazing Grace,* which is worth getting a hold of and explains how we triage our citizens. We decide whose dreams are worth living and whose are not—and those that fall by the wayside are just the price of doing business." *(song intro—5/15/05, Cleveland, OH)*

The Bible tells me so: Springsteen describes Mott Haven as "Ezekiel's valley of dry bones," a reference to Ezekiel 37:1-14. In the Bible passage, the Lord confronts the prophet Ezekiel with a vision of death and decay—a vast valley of long-dead, dry bones. But through the Holy Spirit the bones rejoin, and life is restored: "So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army." (Ezekiel 37:10). The reference suggests that there is hope for even our weariest souls and in our darkest corners, for resurrection and spiritual revival. And as Ezekiel's vision symbolized the return of the nation of Israel, the reference in "Black Cowboys" suggests hope not just for a boy or a neighborhood to "rise up," but a nation.

The "valley of dry bones" also harkens back to the dream in "Devils & Dust" of "a field of mud and bone"—an image that fan Matt Orel connected with Ezekiel 37 even before hearing "Black Cowboys." In his paper *From Adam to Jesus: Springsteen's Use of Scripture,* Orel writes: "'Devils & Dust' turns Ezekiel's dream on its head: The dream is of dry bones, but the dreamer has no vision of reviving them. What rises from the bones isn't living people, but a smell—a smell of death. Without God's intervention, bones do not come back to life, and people killed in battle stay dead. Biblical visions cannot tell the troops of today that God is, indeed, on *their* side."

Lyric cross-check: More bones turn up as "Black Cowboys" shares an image with "Matamoros Banks" in its last line: "The moon rose and stripped the earth to its bone"/"The pale moon opens the earth to its bones."

This song also shares motherly advice in dangerous neighborhoods with "American Skin (41 Shots)": Lynette Williams' advice to her son ("Rainey stay at my side... I want you to come home from school and stay inside") recalls Lena's to hers ("Lena gets her son ready for school / She says 'on these streets, Charles / You've got to understand the rules'").

Bruce Says 4: "Mothers, they're the soul protectors, y'know?... The mother-child connection is so intense. It's so deep. On the songs I've written on this particular record, it's severed—in 'Silver Palomino,' 'Black Cowboys,' 'Jesus Was an Only Son' and 'The Hitter.'"[2]

Bruce Says 5: "I don't know why that [recurring theme] happened. It might have been some things I was reading. Also, I had a close friend that passed away and left two sons. And, of course, my own kids and understanding the intensity of the mother/child bond. They're all songs where that bond gets severed and people are trying to find out how to deal with the severance of that bond. On the record, some find their way in the world and some don't."[6]

Maria's Bed

Despite all the biblical references in his songs, Springsteen never seems to struggle in his songs with secular vs. spiritual, or God vs. sex, as artists like Prince or Jerry Lee Lewis have. This love song comes down firmly—and happily—on the secular side, finding salvation in the pleasures of the flesh. After the singer gives himself "up for dead," that's when the resurrection comes: "Then I drank the cool clear waters from Maria's Bed." And when the heavens don't help or do him wrong: "burned by the angels, sold wings of lead / Then I fell in the roses and / sweet salvation of Maria's bed." That line brings "Leap of Faith" to mind, with its "I kissed you and slipped into a bed of roses"; but the key connection comes in the final line of "Leap of Faith": "And in your love I'm born again."

Just as "Leap of Faith" was one of those autobiographical songs, "Maria's Bed" is probably the easiest track on *Devils & Dust* to imagine Springsteen himself as the narrator, a hard-working man finding shelter in a woman's bed. In the first line he sings, "Been on a barbed wire highway 40 days and nights / I ain't complain'n that's my job and it suits me right." It could be a border guard, could be some guy workin' on the highway, or it could be a touring rock 'n' roll singer.

Bruce Says 1: "Well, you're always writing about yourself no matter what—you can't get away from it. You know, no matter where you turn, you're always there. You hide it in a variety of different ways, I think, and you meld your voice with other lives."[3]

Lyric cross-check: The opening line's reference to "40 days and nights" recalls the first line of "Soul Driver": "Rode through 40 nights of the gospel's rain." The most blatant lyric-sharing, though, is with "Further On (Up the Road)," with quite a few borrowed lines and images. There's the "dead man's suit and smilin' skull ring / Lucky graveyard boots and a song to sing"; and later, "I been out in the desert, doin' my time / Siftin' through the dust... / lookin' for a sign." When it comes to "a light up ahead," the "Further" singer says, "I don't know." In "Maria's Bed," the holy man tells him there *is* a light—but the singer figures, "Ain't nothin' like the light that shines on me in Maria's Bed."

Our favorite Devils & Dust critique: The Minneapolis/St. Paul *City Pages'* Peter S. Scholtes writes: "Springsteen gets into trouble when he abstracts out from the specific, and starts to get mystical. There's something humorous about 'Maria's Bed,' where he's so taken with this woman's sleeping and fucking arrangements, he could be describing the Mississippi River, or the face of God, or eternal bliss itself. When he sings, 'Then I drank the cool clear waters from Maria's bed,' my first thought was: Is it a water bed?

"Sorry, I have to linger on that image for a sec: an impassioned Springsteen down on all fours, gradually glugging the contents of a waterbed."

Roll call: Only halfway through the album, this is the last song to feature Steve Jordan's drums. In addition to playing bass and tambora, O'Brien brings the hurdy-gurdy back, which he played on *The Rising*'s "Into the Fire" and "Empty Sky."As on "Long Time Comin'," Soozie plays violin and sings background vocals with Patti.

Bruce Says 2: "A love song—a love song of ecstasies, of fabulous evenings—that I played with a band on the record, but I will perform all six parts myself, right now." *(song intro—5/10/05, St. Paul, MN)*

Silver Palomino

Another of *Devils & Dust's* mother/son songs, though it's not obvious at first; the first mention of the boy's mother comes more than halfway through the song, with an oblique but artful description of her death: "Mother, your hand slipped from my hair." Springsteen's written introduction in the liner notes is both a dedication to friends and a setting of the scene: "A mother dies, leaving her young son to come to terms with the loss. In remembrance of Fiona Chappel for her sons Tyler and Oliver."

Bruce Says 1: "The last ten years I've lived around horses quite a bit. It's supposed to make up for that pony I didn't quite get when I was six years old. They're a kind of animal with a big spirit and for some reason they seem to enjoy working in concert with the likes of us. A good horse really takes care of you—really takes care of you." *(song intro—5/10/05, St. Paul, MN)*

Bruce Says 2: "Two best friends of my boys had a young mother who passed away at a real young age, and I wanted to write a song for the two of them. I wasn't quite sure how to go about it, so this is a song that I set in Texas, and it's about a young son who loses his mom and he believes that she comes back to him at night in the form of this palomino that comes out of the mountains as he goes to bed." *(song intro—4/21/05, Asbury Park, NJ)*

Lyric cross-check: While the moon turns the earth skeletal elsewhere on this album, here it turns the horse's coat to "frosted diamonds."

Roll call: This one's just Bruce, with strings added later. His vocal performance is particularly unslick: sloppy, twangy, and even hard to understand at times; he later told Jon Pareles in the *New York Times:* "The minute I get the essence of something, I try to stop. If I go back to re-record, sometimes I can hear the thinking a little more."

Bruce Says 3: "There's a lot of bars missing and things in the music. It's sort of in free time, the

music part of it is. And what I'll do is, when I tell myself I'm demo-ing—which I like to tell myself, you know—it releases me from the burden of actually recording, and I go in and just kind of let it fly a little bit. And in this particular song, that creates a sense of instability. And I think that that's why it feels right—that's where the child is at the moment. He's had this crushing loss, and he's entered into this other world."[3]

Jesus Was an Only Son

"I was raised Catholic," Bruce has said on the *Devils & Dust* tour, "so Jesus was my de facto homeboy." In this song Springsteen never gets so glib, but he does set much of the holiness of Jesus aside to look at him as a man and a son. This is another of the mother/son songs on *Devils & Dust*, largely imagining Mary's perspective—her desire to protect her son, and her ultimate loss. But Springsteen never lets us forget the destiny of the child himself. Of the first line, "Jesus was an only son / As he walked up Calvary Hill," Springsteen explained at the *Storytellers* performance: "Well that's his proving ground. That's darkness on the edge of town. That's his darkness on the edge of town." (Sorta gives new meaning to "Tonight I'll be on that hill 'cause I can't stop.") The last two lines of the song—Jesus' explanation for his choice and his more-things-in-heaven-and-earth-Horatio words of comfort to Mary—is a succinctly powerful piece of writing: "For remember the soul of the universe / Willed a world and it appeared."

Alternate version: The *VH1 Storytellers* performance of this song was officially released on DVD in September 2005, featuring Springsteen interjecting additional thoughts throughout as he would on tour.

Bruce Says 1: "On *Devils & Dust*, I wrote several songs about mothers and sons.... I had second thoughts about it today when I was behind a car with a bumpersticker that said "Drive Carefully: My Mommy is in this Car"—and I was moved to hit the gas and rear-end her as hard as I could. But it's something I haven't written a whole lot before, and I was kind of interested in the relationship between parent and child, which is why Mary figures so prominently in the song. I felt if I approached the song from the secular side, the rest of it would come through. 'Jesus was an only son'—that's my main metaphor. Of course, Jesus had earthly brothers and sisters, but not on this particular day. This day, he was singular." *(song intro—4/4/05, Red Bank, NJ)*

Bruce Says 2: "And so I, of course, thought back. What would it be like if Jesus was—everybody is somebody's baby. I was thinking of Jesus as someone's son, and Mary as the mother. A funny thing happens, I think, when we turn things into icons: we sort of blow them up and diminish them, and at the same time, we forget the human side—that there was an actual life there all the time." *(song intro—8/10/05, Portland, OR)*

Bruce Says 3: "I tried to imagine the story from Mary's perspective, because for her, she was just losing her boy. I guess it's kind of a song about what makes our choices mean something. It's the stuff that we sacrifice—the things that we give up to gain something else. That's what makes our choices have meaning—the things that we sacrifice. So, this is kind of a song about that. (It's) also a song about a mother's place and the son trying to console his mother about the choices he's made." *(5/10/05, St. Paul, MN)*

Lyric cross-check: "A mother prays, 'Sleep tight, my child, sleep well / For I'll be at your side" echoes Lynette Williams: "Rainey stay at my side, for you are my blessing you are my pride." (Heck, they even rhyme!) And of course Mary—this time, *the* Mary—is one of many so-named characters in Springsteen's songs. Jesus has also appeared in his canon before, in "It's Hard to Be a Saint in the City," "The New Timer," "Leap of Faith," "Wild Billy's Circus Story," and the unreleased "If I Was the Priest." And of course, this is far from the first time Springsteen has used Bible stories in his songs, including those of Cain & Abel, the Garden of Eden, the Flood, Daniel in the Lion's Den, the parting of the Red Sea, and, most of all, the Promised Land.

Bruce Says 4: "A sense of human community that's connected through spiritual goals somehow connects with my own music.... I was brought up Catholic, so a lot of my schooling was filled with religious and spiritual imagery. Some of those things got distorted, but some had resonant meaning for me when I went to interpret the world myself. I used religious imagery going back to the beginning of all my writing, 'Lost in the Flood,' 'Saint in the City.' It was something I naturally gravitated to."[4]

Bruce Says 5: "Catholic school, Catholic school, Catholic school. You're indoctrinated. It's a none-too-subtle form of brainwashing, and of course, it works very well. I'm not a churchgoer, but I realized, as time passed, that my music is filled with Catholic imagery. It's not a negative thing. There was a powerful world of potent imagery that became alive and vital and vibrant, and was both very frightening and held out the promise of ecstasies and paradise. There was this incredible internal landscape that they created in you.

As I got older, I got a lot less defensive about it. I thought, I've inherited this particular landscape and I can build it into something of my own. I've been back to the church on many occasions, and I have a lot of friendships with priests. And I've been to the convent where the nuns now give me beer, which they have in the refrigerator. I don't think they had that when I was going to school there."[5]

Roll call: Springsteen plays all instruments on this one, including keyboards, bass and drums; the full trio of Redheaded Women (Soozie and Patti, plus Lisa Lowell) perform background vocals.

Leah

After performing "Two Hearts" in Greensboro, Bruce went into this song by saying, "Same story, different words." The second verse of "Two Hearts" in particular suggests the crux of "Leah": "Someday these childish dreams must end / To become a man and grow up to dream again." That's what the singer of "Leah" decides as he opens the door and climbs the stairs at song's end. The hammer and the lantern in the second verse represent our warring tendencies to create and destroy; as he told the *New York Times*' Jon Pareles: "In every song on this record, somebody's in some spiritual struggle between the worst of themselves and the best of themselves, and everybody comes out in a slightly different place." The singer of "Leah," accepting that two hearts are better than one, fares pretty well. In concert, Springsteen has mentioned being inspired by Roy Orbison's song of the same name, which has lyrics that could easily fit other, less fortunate characters on *Devils & Dust*: "Old heartaches and memories from the past / It was just another dream about my lost love / 'Bout Leah."

Bruce Says 1: "I took the title from a Roy Orbison song about a pearl diver. A beautiful Roy Orbison song. Roy was one of those guys who could sing about anything. I met him and I went to his house one afternoon, and he sang me this song about wind surfing. And I say to myself—I didn't say it to him—Gee, I don't know... *wind surfing*? It's hard to pull that one off! Surfing, it's been done. It's been big. But *wind* surfing? It killed John Kerry in the election... it's hard to pull off. But, the record came out and he had this beautiful song about wind surfing—made me want to wind surf. So, this title came from one of his records. But there's also a lady in the Bible—quite a hell-raiser, I believe." *(song intro—5/10/05, St. Paul, MN)*

The Bible tells me so: In the Bible (Genesis, 29-35), weak-eyed, unloved Leah gets a raw deal—Jacob, who is in love with her more beautiful younger sister, Rachel, is tricked into marrying her. And this is not a love story, as Jacob never comes around. Springsteen gives his "Leah" a happier ending.

Bruce Says 2: "I always felt that the subjects I was drawn to came from my family's experience of being invisible people, who are discounted and somewhat marginalized. I felt very much the outsider, within the community, and even today I struggle with it, emotionally and psychologically. And I figured that if I didn't like it, other people don't like it either.

"So I was kind of drawn to folks who are marginalized and yet not fundamentally rebellious. They're trying to find their way in. That was where my music doesn't fit in the classic rock pantheon, in that they were only modestly rebellious. Really, they were trying to find their way in, to get connected, to build some place to live, to create something for themselves and to give back something to the place that they're in."[7]

Lyric cross-check: The opening line, "I wanna build me a house, on higher ground," echoes a line from "Across the Border": "For you I'll build a house / High up on a grassy hill."

Bruce Says 3: "We walk through the world carrying the seeds of our destruction along with the seeds of the things that we can use to build and create things. Our live are a tug of war between those two places—that, I suppose, is God's joke. The price of free will, maybe. This is about a man who just figures out how to come down on the right side of that story. This is 'Leah'—a love story." *(song intro—6/7/05, Milan, Italy)*

Roll call: Those "li li li" background vocals are all Bruce—he handles everything except trumpet, which is performed by Mark Pender. As a member of the Miami Horns, Pender was all over Southside Johnny's *Better Days* album, which included the original "All the Way Home." Also an Asbury Juke and one of the Max Weinberg 7, Pender has played with Springsteen numerous times: onstage from the *Tunnel of Love* Express Tour to the Asbury Park holiday shows; on record, from "Give the Girl a Kiss" to "Mary's Place."

The Hitter

An aging fighter returns to his mother's home, looking for sanctuary and rest, and pleads with her to let him in as he stands at her door and tells his rags-to-riches-to-rags story. Despite his repeated entreaties, as far as the listener knows his mother never does unlock that chain, and the Hitter tells his entire story through that locked door, as if in a confession booth. "The Hitter" has often been sequenced after "Leah" on the *Devils & Dust* tour, just as it is on the album, and Springsteen referred to this song as "the flipside of that story—I guess you can lose it as easy as you can find it. If you can find it at all in the first place."

Bruce Says 1: "This song is kind of the opposite side of ['Leah"s] equation, I guess—it's the seeds of our destruction. It's about a young guy that gets in trouble and leaves home for New Orleans, becomes quite a champion, comes back through town at the end of his life and has this conversation with his mother through a locked door. Freud is smiling in his grave somewhere, I'm sure. I grew up in a house that was both sort of touched by fortune and by the real harsh hand of fate, and I found out that those things don't cancel each other out—you just end up living with the two of them. And that sort of defined the parameters of my songwriting over the years." *(song intro—5/30/05, Brussels, Belgium)*

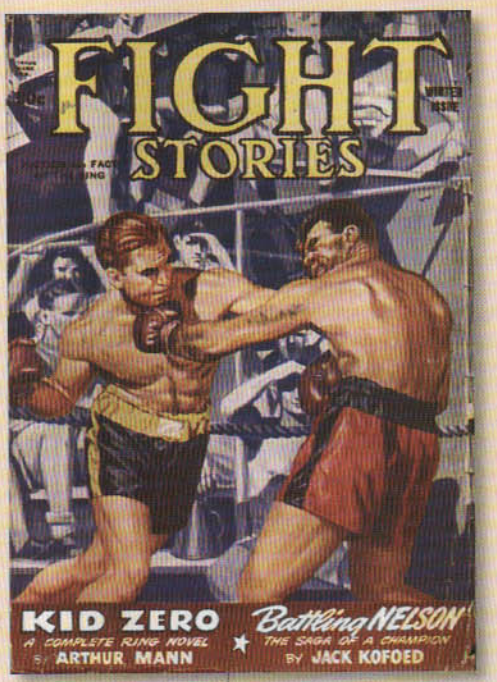
Timeline: Springsteen debuted this song on the *Tom Joad* tour, on November 13, 1996, at the Landmark Theater in Syracuse, NY. It was just a few days after Mike Tyson lost the WBA Heavyweight Championship to Evander Holyfield, and Bruce introduced the song by asking, "Anybody see the fight the other night? That was something," he laughed, "Oops—Big Mike went down!" Springsteen performed the song exactly once—its debut was the only time the song was heard until its appearance on *Devils & Dust*.

Alternate version: The recorded

version is very similar to that 11/13/96 performance, with just a bit of fine-tuning: "If *my face* you don't recognize" was changed to *"my voice"*; and the stockyard of the final verse was changed to a shipyard.

Inspiration: It's well known that movies have inspired Bruce's songwriting over the years, and "The Hitter" has striking similarities with the 1959 Marlon Brando film, *The Fugitive Kind*. (Even that movie title sounds like it'd make a good Bruce song.) In this black & white adaptation of Tennessee Williams' *Orpheus Descending*, directed by Sidney Lumet, Brando plays Valentine "Snakeskin" Xavier, also a drifter in trouble with the law in Louisiana. He's a guitar player, not a boxer, but he plays many of the same Louisiana towns mentioned in "The Hitter," and there's a scene early in the film when Val stands at a doorstep in the pouring rain, begging through the chain to come in and lie down for a while.

What's in a name: While John McDowell, who beats the song's narrator in the fixed fight at the armory, seems to be Springsteen's creation, "champion Jack Thompson" was a real fighter. Thompson (1904-1946) was known as "Young Jack Thompson" and "The Frisco Flash" and was the World Welterweight Champion in 1930 and 1931.



As for the Southern Queen, on which the narrator left home as a kid, numerous vessels have had that name. Most interestingly, in the 1941 film *The Lady Eve*, Southern Queen is the name of a ship ridden by Henry Ford—fresh from his portrayal of Tom Joad in 1940's *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Bruce Says 2: "I tend to like to write songs about people whose souls are at risk—probably goes back to being told that every day for eight years as a child at school. Those things tend to stick with you, if you know what I mean. But I later on found out that writing about it momentarily put my own soul at ease, and so I gravitated towards those kinds of characters." *(song intro—4/28/05, Dallas, TX)*

All I'm Thinkin' About

"I'm in a flat bed Ford carrying a heavy load" brings to mind a line from the Eagles' "Take it Easy," "it's a girl, my Lord, in a flat bed Ford...." In Springsteen's travelogue, runnin' down the road, tryin' to loosen his load, the narrator of this song only has one woman on his mind (as opposed to the seven), but it ain't the one sitting next to him sippin' on blueberry wine. "All I'm Thinkin' About" may sound like a jaunty sing-along love song, but this guy's definitely carrying a heavy load, obsessing over a woman he left: "Brown eyed girl, I turned my back / on you, now it's lonely... Ain't nothing' in this world /take away these blues."

Lyric cross-check: "All I'm Thinkin' About" also brings to mind Neil Young's "Don't Let it Bring You Down," which has a similar opening line: "Old man lyin' by the side of the road" (and the blind man turns up later). As for Springsteen's own songs, this one shares a locale with "Cadillac Ranch": "Junior Johnson runnin' through the woods of Caroline." Is Bruce taking a liking to our new homestate? Well...

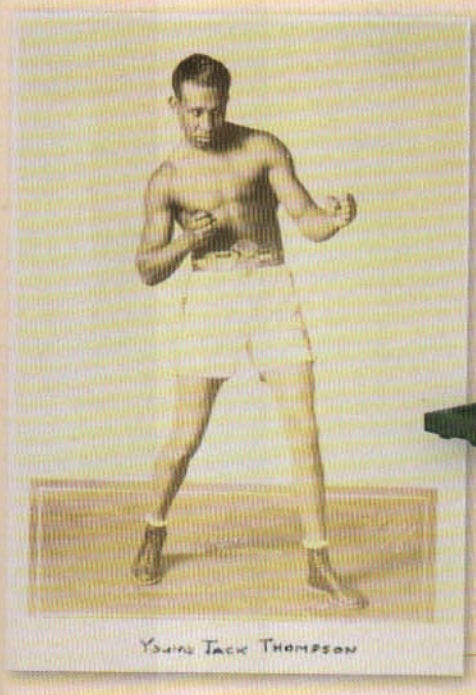
Bruce Says 1: "I used the name of the state [despite] not knowing a hell of a lot about the place. But it rhymed with *wine*. *Caroline* is good, a lot rhymes with it. *Jersey*'s not so good that way... *Guernsey?*" *(song intro—7/24/05, Charlotte, NC)*

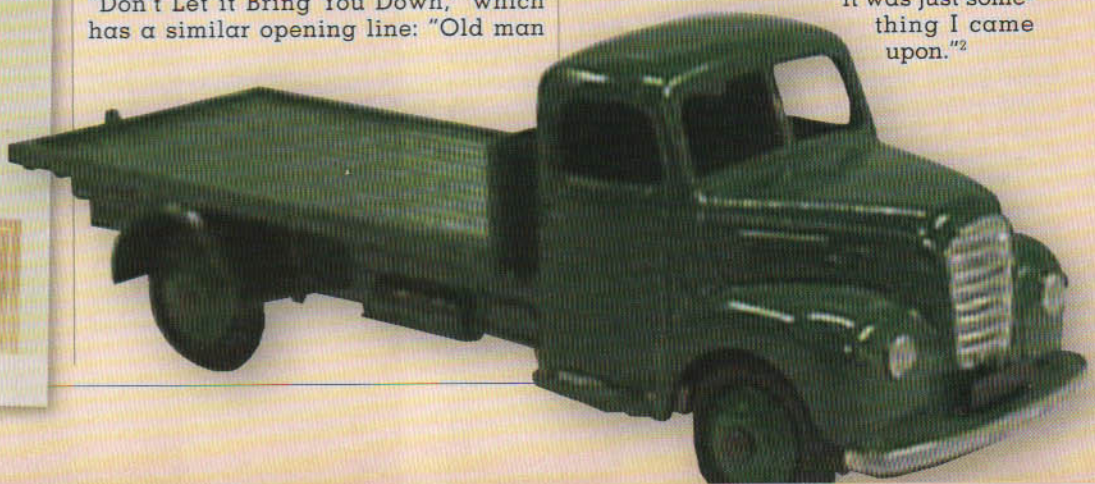
Alternate version: The Danny Clinch-filmed acoustic performance appears on the DVD side of the DualDisc.

Roll call: Similar line-up to that on "Jesus Was an Only Son," just adding O'Brien on bass—this is the producer's only instrument credit on the back half of the album. But the most interesting instrument on this song is Springsteen's voice, which rides along in a near-falsetto upper register. Reviewers have compared the vocal style to Skip James, Canned Heat, and Mungo Jerry; Springsteen himself, at VH1 *Storytellers*, presented it as his Smokey Robinson.

Bruce Says 2: "You would have to go back to the doo-wop singers who sang in those beautiful falsettos. Those have gotten lost in the past ten or 20 years. You forget all the unbelievable and beautiful falsetto singing by men that was occurring in the '50s and '60s. These were just amazing voices. They communicated an integration of men and women that was unique. Also, it's a very sensual sound.

"So it's something I've tried to develop. On this record, I got up my nerve to sing a whole song in it. I was lucky, 'cause I didn't have it before my mid-40s. Through the '70s and the '80s, I never had it. It's very unusual to sustain that if you do a lot of hard singing. The first thing that goes usually is your top. But it was just something I came upon."[2]





Matamoros Banks

Not to be confused—as it was on some early track listings—with *Matamoras*, the name of very small towns in Pennsylvania and Ohio, Matamoros is a city in northeastern Mexico, near the mouth of the Rio Grande and directly across the river from Brownsville, Texas. If this song brings to mind *The Ghost of Tom Joad*'s "Across the Border," there's a good reason: Springsteen has explicitly said that he wrote "Matamoros Banks" as a sequel.

In one way, this sequel is a bleak one: we learn of the character's fate in the verse first verse, as his dead body floats to the surface of the Rio Grande. It's a good reminder that the narrator of "Across the Border" never actually makes the trip in that song—it's all about his hope for the future, and what he envisions awaits, but we never see him get there; "Tonight my bag is packed," he sings, "Tomorrow I'll walk these tracks." As revealed in the follow-up, he doesn't make it. But in structuring "Matamoros Banks" the way he does and setting it to a sweet, reassuring melody, Springsteen continues to stress not only the importance of hope, but of trying to make it real. The song ends not with the character's death, but his choice to make his way "in search of a better life," as Springsteen writes in the liner notes. Putting it all together, we see that the narrator spent his last breaths striving to be reunited with his darling and giving thanks to God for her love. It's at once a beautiful if tragic act of love and hope, a piece of gritty realism (and in that way, it joins "Galveston Bay" as a reaction to the dream of "Across the Border"), and an indictment of U.S. immigration policy.

Bruce Says 1: "I was to the end of the *Tom Joad* record and I needed a few songs and I think I wrote "Across the Border," and I had that down at the end of the record. I played it through and listened to it, and I said, "Yeah, that's good—but that's the dream. That's that thing that keeps people moving along for some reason. I felt like I needed something else, something that wasn't so much of a dream." *("Galveston Bay" intro—9/25/96, Akron, OH)*

Timeline: Written in 1995 or '96, as Springsteen told the audience on the *Devils & Dust* tour: "I wrote this shortly after I wrote the four songs set in California on the *Tom Joad* record."

Bruce Says 2: "I wrote this one as a sequel to a song I wrote called 'Across the Border'... It sort of tells a similar story. A man makes the same journey, fueled by the same desires for work and to take care of his family and his kids.

"But every year, hundreds of people die trying to get into the United States. They die in the rivers, they die in the mountains, crossing the deserts and they die in the back of vans and trailers. Instead of vigilantes down along the border, we need a President with the guts to come up with a humane immigration policy.

"I wrote this song backwards. First verse: body at the bottom of the river; second verse: walks across the desert; third verse: comes to the banks of the Matamoros side." *(song intro—5/19/05, East Rutherford, NJ)*

Aerial View of Brownsville, Texas and Matamoros, Mexico

2—U. S. Custom House and Gateway Bridge, Brownsville, Texas, Looking towards Mexico

Putting it in reverse: While Bruce explains, both in concert and in the liner notes, that the song "follow(s) the journey backwards," it's not a really *Memento*-style narrative. The chronological order of the verses, rather than 3-2-1, is actually 3-1-2.

Bruce Says 3: "I think what happened is that I wrote the first verse, and normally that would be a final act. Then I had to think, well, this first verse is very powerful. Where do I go with this? I can't go forward, so I have to go back. It sort of defined itself. I don't think I ever tried to make that verse the last verse. Right from the beginning, that line 'The river keeps you down,' that's an opening line. You're into the song the minute you hear it."[1]

Lyric cross-check: As you'd expect, Springsteen uses similar imagery to "Across the Border": "I sleep and dream of holding you in my arms again" echoes "I'll dream of you my corazon... And may the saints' blessing and grace / Carry me safely into your arms." But he also highlights the contrast between the dream and the reailty in these two songs: "'neath the open skies / I'll kiss the sorrow from your eyes" has a gruesome parallel in "The turtles eat the skin from your eyes, so they lay open to the stars."

And just as "Across the Border" could easily be interpreted as a metaphysical border crossing, an expression of hope for the afterlife, so, too, does "Matamoros Banks" suggest the promise of another world: "Then you rise to the light without a sound... And the things of the earth they make their claim / That the things of heaven may do the same."

Bruce Says 4: "I lived in California for a few years. It was an interesting part of America to live in. It was just becoming very, very multi-cultural. [There was] a lot of border reporting in the newspapers—a real sense of how the country was changing. It can still feel very 'frontiersy.' I took some trips down to southern California and down through the border. Every year hundreds of people die trying to get across the southern border of the United States, to come and work in the toughest jobs and send money back home. They die in the deserts, and in the mountains, and in the rivers.

"So, this is something I wrote about that—for them." *(song intro—6/25/05, Gothenburg, Sweden)*

1. Steve Morse, "The quiet American." *Boston Globe*, May 19, 2005
2. John Soeder, "Springsteen's solo tour gives 'Devils' its due." *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 15, 2005
3. Renee Montagne, "Springsteen discusses his latest release, part 1." National Public Radio's *Morning Edition*, April 26, 2005
4. Dave Fanning, "Maybe I was born to run... and run and run." *Sunday Independent*, July 3, 2005
5. Jon Pareles, "Bruce Almighty." *New York Times*, April 24, 2005
6. Jon Bream, "Springsteen: The man & his fans." *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, May 10, 2005
7. Robert Everett-Green, "Springsteen is no less than storyteller-in-chief for his generation." *Toronto Globe and Mail*, July 16, 2005

DEVILS ADVOCATES

Backstreets readers take on *Devils & Dust*

I always thought the best part of the *Rising* shows was the black and white "Countin' on a Miracle" video at the end. I wanted the whole album to sound like that. It would somehow be more lonely that way. But no, the record and the shows were big and bloated, and the machine rolled on for two years and more than 100 knee slides. I think this new album is Bruce's best record since *Tunnel of Love*. He sounds relaxed (finally). He sounds like he's making the music he wants to make the way he wants to make it. *The Rising* sounded like a guy in a parking lot told Bruce we needed him and Bruce went to "work." This record sounds like Bruce had some songs he really liked, recorded them, and released them. Isn't that his "job" in the first place? ***John Mayer / Venice, CA***

Overall, a fine but flawed effort. My only real complaint is that some of the crucial lines in the *Joad*-ish story songs are indecipherable due to a combination of Bruce's vocal "stylings" (read, mumbling) and the overwash of background instrumentation. In general, I like the added instrumentation, but there are critical portions of "Reno," "Black Cowboys," "The Hitter," and "Matamoros Banks" where the music drowns out the not-as-clear-as-they-could-be vocals. As a result, Bruce's poignant songwriting is buried, and a potentially brilliant song like "The Hitter" is lost in the flood. In order to appreciate the slower songs with their often heartbreaking stories, the listener needs to be able to hear and follow the words without the effort required for this disc (Personal note: reading the lyric sheet while driving is not a good idea). That basic production flaw does not drag down the entire album. The songwriting is consistently outstanding and the lyrical vagueness that plagued *The Rising* in places is thankfully absent here. The up-tempo country-esque numbers recall some of my favorite Stones work; and Bruce and Brendan O'Brien deserve credit for adding a shot or two of rootsy Americana where needed. "Long Time Coming," "Jesus," and "Devils & Dust" are new additions to my own personal "Essential Bruce" catalogue. Had the slower numbers been cleaned-up a bit, *Devils & Dust* would go down as an understated (and probably under-appreciated) gem. As it is, the new disc is solid but not spectacular.
Art Hubacher / Fairfax Station, VA

"Devils & Dust" does not really fit in here, as it seems like it is trying to be a "big song." The rest of the songs seem like they are Bruce at his best as a storyteller. It definitely kicks *Tom Joad*'s (substitute in the $250 "Reno" subject)
Andrew Berke / Chattanooga, TN

This one will be collecting dust sooner than any other of his releases. Don't like the updated "Irish side" of Bruce, as he said on *Dateline*. Feed the man some lasagna and get him back to his Italian roots. ***Bryan King / Austin, TX***

On my first several listens of *Devils & Dust* I could not have been more disappointed. I wasn't uplifted, I wasn't inspired, and I wasn't fired up. I literally had a knot in my stomach because I wanted more from this album. I've grown to appreciate the album and the beauty of several of the songs, but I don't think I'll be turning to this album in the future. I find myself in need of a pissed off Bruce, or at least a Bruce who's ready to sing his guts out. I'm not asking for a rock album, because I love acoustic Bruce, but I'm asking for an album that tries to match the ferocity of [Green Day's] *American Idiot*—now that's how you sing when you don't like what's happening in Washington!
Chris Taylor / Ramsey, NJ

I love this album. Not concerned about the "adult imagery." A little concerned about the falsetto!
Daniel Kavanagh / Dublin, Ireland

I liked this album a lot on my first listen, which is unusual for me. I *loved* some of the songs by the second listen. Case in point: "Reno"—it's like watching an old black & white movie that suddenly turns to Technicolor in the middle, then returns to black & white again at the end. I have always loved the cinematic quality in Bruce's writing, and this song is a beautiful and heart-rending example. "Matamoros Banks" and "Jesus Was an Only Son" have made me weep at their elegant sadness. By now, having listened to *D&D* many times and having seen the live show (which was spectacular) I'd rank this album as Springsteen's best since the criminally underrated *Lucky Town*. It doesn't have the filler that *The Rising* suffered from, and the material is very strong. This album is not what I expected it to be; it's much better than that. Springsteen still has the ability to surprise me, even after all these years of being a fan.
Barbara Stenstrup / Wauwatosa, WI

"Jesus" is superb—really strong writing. I also think "Reno" is superb. The graphic nature of that piece just adds to the overall loneliness and sadness—it's crude and empty, and the language supports that theme; fine job. "All I'm Thinkin' About" is putrid, and the video version is so bad it can make my dog jump up and hide under the couch.

We need to stop comparing albums to *Darkness* and *Born to Run*—he'll never match those two—but this, in my opinion, is much stronger than *The Rising*. Time to retire the band (okay, one more blast-off tour) and focus on this type of songwriting. "Ramrod" is starting to sound silly. But "Matamoros Banks," that's as strong a song as he's ever written. One of his finest and most affecting pieces, a whole life and a strong political statement all wrapped up in three minutes. Man, that's good. ***David Treherne / Richmond Hill, ON, Canada***

Very disappointing, but we've all got a lot of coin in this relationship, so a mulligan is allowed.... Let's move on.
Chris Dickson / Maplewood, NJ

There was so much negativity swirling around this release way before it even hit the shelf. From the explicit lyrics of "Reno," to the falsetto, to the fact that a lot of the songs were previously written. I read what people had to say, but never listened to any of the pre-released tracks. I wanted to get my own take on it by actually *listening* to the record. To me, most of the complaining was for nothing. Yeah, "Reno" deals with adult subject matter, but I think the song was beautifully sung and told in a way that is not "dirty." Bruce has been writing about sex since his first record. Yeah, maybe not like this, but "we're not that young anymore," so I think we, as adults, can handle it. The falsetto I think is used well on this record along

"Reno" too Devilish? Older songs too Dusty?

Some find fault with Springsteen's latest release, but most think that it strikes just the right chord even if it's not his finest work. In our *Backstreets* readers' poll, the fans speak out.

POLL POSITIONS

WHEN *BACKSTREETS* SOUGHT TO GATHER FANS' opinions of *Devils & Dust* we offered a limited number of questions (six) with unlimited space in the comment box. Poll takers didn't hesitate to deluge that box with insight and honesty and opinions that run the gamut. We thank everyone who visited Backstreets.com and took the time to share their thoughts—the response was fan-tabulous! Keep in mind that this poll was conducted before most had heard these songs performed live in concert. So the numbers and opinions you find here are almost solely a direct result of that special relationship between a music lover and a CD player. OK, it was a DualDisc, so we got the DVD player involved, too. A little technological/human three-way, you might say. Hey, for a list price of $18.98 it sure beats that Reno pay-scale!

Numbers Crunch

Using a scale of 1 to 10, we asked participants to rate each track on *Devils & Dust*. Here are the average scores.

Long Time Comin'	8.63
Devils & Dust	8.15
Maria's Bed	8.13
All I'm Thinkin' About	7.78
Leah	7.76
Jesus Was an Only Son	7.58
Matamoros Banks	7.42
All the Way Home	7.38
The Hitter	7.29
Black Cowboys	6.86
Reno	6.53
Silver Palomino	6.33

The Six-pack

Where does the *Devils & Dust* album rank amongst the Springsteen canon?

42.6 %	Middle of the pack (at least it's new!)
37.9 %	Not his best, but close
8.2 %	Could be worse...
6.5 %	Top of the heap
4.2 %	Bottom of the barrel

If you had to pick one, what would you say is the biggest story of the record?

33.1 %	Returning to character-based storytelling
31.2 %	Experimenting with new vocal styles
11.9 %	Adding bonus commentary/video tracks
8.7 %	Revisiting previously written material
6.1 %	Recording with Brendan O'Brien and Steve Jordan
5.9 %	Using "adult imagery"
1.2 %	Writing about Iraq... in some fashion

Which version of "All the Way Home" do you like better?

35.0 %	I don't know the Southside version
29.1 %	The version on *Devils & Dust*
25.9 %	The version on Southside Johnny's *Better Days*
9.6 %	No preference

with the other vocal styles. Like Bruce said, he was playing with his vocals to try to get the right sound that would encompass what the character was going through and trying to "be" the character's voice. I think it worked well. Bravo for stepping out of the box, Bruce.

Michelle LeRoy / North Smithfield, RI

I rate "Reno" low not because of the language, but because the song is flat and uninteresting, both verbally and, even more so, musically. I find "Silver Palomino" strangely unmoving as well, especially given the introductory comments. "The Hitter" seems to inhabit a fictional, not a real, environment. On the positive side, the title song is a powerful, complex look through a believably individual prism at what has happened to our sorry national consciousness these last years. It's one of those songs that in three minutes strikes you as holding the material that could make a serious movie or book. And then it grows on you during subsequent listenings. And "Leah," "Long Time Comin'," and "Maria's Bed" are the other stars—heartfelt, passionate, grown-up songs. I love the daringly simple ending of "Leah": no turn back into the song where your ear expects to go, instead that turn up the stairs towards life, where the best Bruce songs always take us.

John Engle / Marseille, France

I'm happy to be a fan of a musician and songwriter who's capable of displaying more than just one area of skill. It's a complex and challenging group of songs which compels the listener to recognize some difficult realities in a mature way. His songwriting and character portraiture have never been more masterful. Though this album might not be first on the list as anyone's "favorite," I think it may be the one that proves among the most personally meaningful: not the one you crank up loud at the tailgate, but the one you put on late in the evening, when you're alone in the house with the windows open—one you really sink into for the wisdom that's in it. We shouldn't always expect Bruce to wear the rockstar mantle. Sometimes he gives us what we want, and sometimes he gives us what we need. This is one of the albums we need.

Michelle Moon / Kittery, ME

I think that this album is really best appreciated only after hearing it performed live. I was fortunate enough to catch four early shows, and seeing the songs played live really gave them total context for me. If I could change only one thing about the album, I would have preferred Bruce go with the stripped down version of "Long Time Comin'." It's one of the best songs on the album, if not the best, but I have to confess I kind of cringed for the first five or six times hearing it with all of the backing vocals and all of the extra production. Took me a while to get used to. I still love the song, but much prefer it solo/stripped down. "Reno" is such an incredible song. It's a shame that so much emphasis and attention has been placed on the "R rating," totally losing the true depth and meaning of the song. All in all, I think one of the greatest things about *Devils & Dust* is not even so much a particular track, but just the fact that it shows how much Bruce has continued to remain relevant, continues to push the envelope, try new sounds, and not hit the cruise control. It's one of the keystones of what has made Bruce's music so great for over 30 years (in addition, of course, to his incredible live performances).

Paul Bernstein / Windsor, CT

I'm intially confused by the *Tom Joad* comparisons. I find the record to be a much wider and overall rewarding experience than *Joad*. Brendan O'Brien has rediscovered Bruce's voice, and the sparse instrumentation leads to more sonic variety than is possible in the fairly rigid E Street format. Rewriting his past is something I wasn't expecting, and comparisons between the two versions of "All the Way Home" are meaningless, as they are two completely different songs which happen to share a lyric, a bit like "Child Bride" and "Working on the Highway." The new version of "Long Rime Comin'," however, is the standout track so far. I wasn't up for any messing about on this one, as I loved the acoustic version from the *Joad* tour, so I wasn't expecting to approve of tinkering. "The Hitter" is up there with "Highway Patrolman" as his best-ever story song, and songs like "Maria's Bed" and "Leah" add a much lighter tone to the record, something lacking on *Joad*. Even my wife approves. Strangely, in this first week of listening, I liken it more to *Lucky Town* than any other Bruce record.

Paul Smith / Glasgow, Scotland

"We played king of the mountain out on the end, the world come chargin' up the hill, and we were *Devils and Dust*." Sound familiar?

Dustin Dillman / Frackville, PA

I was struck at first by how many references to classic rock songs are on *Devils & Dust*, both lyrically and musically. From a "flat bed Ford" to "Crackling Rosie" to "Sugar Mountain" lyrically, to some Neil Young melodies in "Long Time Comin'" and a fiddle line echoing The Band's "Rag Mama Rag" in "Maria's Bed." At first, these both-

ered me, though there's a deft sense of humor in the "Crackling Rosie" line. However, upon repeated listens, I found these references to be quirky and kinda cool. I find *D&D* to be Bruce's most honest and human album ever. It is also an album only a 50+ year-old dad could make. And it is one that only people in touch with their own existence might appreciate. And by the way, anyone offended by "Reno" probably hasn't had an interesting sex life, not even close! As for other reactions I have read, I think a lot of people are disturbed by their own skin, so any CD dealing with sex (especially paid or anal), mortality, and the death of loved ones is going to provoke a gut reaction based on fear and preconceived notions. And I bet The Boss planned on that.

Rob Davis / New York, NY

"All I'm Thinkin' About" is great. At first listen, all I could think of was it being used as a backdrop to a Country Time lemonade commercial. The lyrics are great, but I'd love to hear a version without falsetto vocals. Also, tired of hearing about cowboys and vagrants.

Peter Teixeira / West Bridgewater, MA

It's kind of funny to see how shocked—shocked!—some people seem to be at "Reno." Obviously, they know nothing about a certain Santa Claus song, or a certain introduction to "Red Headed Woman." But whereas there the ribald talk served to loosen up the heavy cast of the *Tom Joad* material, on "Reno" the explicit anatomy language helps to differentiate how this act of copulation is in some ways a betrayal of the real love the narrator remembers in such beautiful terms. Certain conservative listeners may be quick to condemn this magnificent artistic achievement without realizing how accurately its values may reflect their own.

Alan Lewis / Maybrook, NY

Being a Republican Springsteen fan has been difficult the last few years. I did not see the Vote For Change tour and that marks the first time Springsteen toured that I hadn't seen him in over 20 years. I couldn't bring myself to support the cause he was fighting for or the candidate he supported. Regardless, since the election, I have spent a lot of time coming to grips with the fact that I can have opposing political opinions and still love the music and the man who makes it. *Devils & Dust* helped me come back. I know that Bruce's ideals and values are what drive him to make such amazing music. The real beauty is that his songs and his stories are written in such a way that each individual can translate them in their own way. He sings of struggles in one's heart, not overtly singing about his opposition of the right wing or of the war. My favorite song is "Long Time Comin'." Not just because it's upbeat, but because it tells such a great story of a guy who wasn't perfect growing up. He didn't have much guidance from his parents, particularly his dad, yet he has come to a realization of where he is in his life. The imagery is so intense. I guess because I am at that age with two young kids and a wife, I think about how important I am to them, and how I need to be a good man for their sake. Anyway, I am back 100% on board for the ride. A mellow, acoustic ride, but the ride nonetheless. Thank you, Bruce, for transcending politics and creating another masterpiece.

Steve Infante / Plainfield, IL

I like "Reno" as an idea and construct, but the candid language to me is a huge distraction. I think the first lines were fine and add to the song (as far as the contrast between what he had back when and what he's paying for now), but the lines at the end are just bizarre and unnecessary. I'm no prude—many of my favorite records are by the Stones, Guns N' Roses, Pearl Jam, etc.—so F-words and other harsh language is never a problem. But it has to fit the song (album, or artist), and in this case it just doesn't. I won't skip the song when I'm listening alone, but I will with my kids in the car. And that's when I took my smoke break at the Oakland show, which is a shame because the song and its idea are so cool. But you got to love Bruce for taking chances. I may not like it personally, but I respect him for it.

Steve McLin / Walnut Creek, CA

"Reno" is a career low point, but based on "Red Headed Woman," "The Fuse," and "Reno" among others, maybe Bruce is just starting to dig for more filth. It's a cancer on the record and should be an embarrassment for an accomplished, talented writer. Do what I do: skip it altogether and listen to the *Tunnel of Love* record. Bruce appears to be at a place in our society where he can do no wrong in the eyes of most critics, magazines, and fans. For me, the vulgarity of "Reno" has to have repercussions. So, while there are some great songs on this record that deserve a high place in his songbook, "Reno" makes *Devils & Dust* his worst album to date.

John Leopold / Fairfax, VA

I loved Southside Johnny's "All the Way Home." It was a beautiful image of a lonely evening that turned into a slight chance of hope for the narrator. When Southside sang about failing with the "whole world looking on,"

How does "Reno" strike you?

53.0 %	Candid and frank
27.5 %	Poignant and beautiful
14.0 %	Time for a beer break
3.9 %	Filthy and obscene
1.2 %	What's he talking about, Mom?

What was your favorite performance on the DVD?

39.5 %	Long Time Comin'
25.2 %	All I'm Thinkin' About
18.5 %	Devils & Dust
10.2 %	Matamoros Banks
6.6 %	Reno

Did you experience any technical troubles playing the DualDisc?

87.1 %	No
8.1 %	Yes, the CD side
3.3 %	Yes, the DVD side
1.4 %	Yes, both sides

Painting by Numbers

After ingesting that six-pack, we decided to take a closer look at the results to see if they really mean anything. Is there a larger picture that we can paint with these numbers? We'll let the readers' comments fill in most of the blanks, but there are a few things worth noting here.

Of the three *Devils & Dust* songs ranked the lowest ("Black Cowboys," "Reno," and "Silver Palomino") it was "Reno" whose score was most interesting. Even though its average rating was approximately 6.5 out of 10, relatively few people gave it a six or a seven. This song seems to either be loved (with many 8s and 9s) or strongly disliked (with many 2s and 3s as well.) But don't go jumping to conclusions there. Says Chris Allen: "Reno isn't obscene, it's just bad. I have no problem with the imagery and language, I just wish Bruce had done a better job with the story." Combine that with the paltry four percent who chose "filthy and obscene" to best describe the song, and we realize there's more going on here than headline news.

Here's a question for you: If "Long Time Comin'"—a song written in the mid-'90s—is the consensus "gem" of this record, why isn't "revisiting previously written material" more highly regarded as the biggest story of the record (chosen on less than 9% of the polls)? Along those same lines, the song "Devils & Dust" is also very well-liked, yet "writing about Iraq" barely blips the radar screen on the same "biggest story"-question. One song does not an album make, the readers seem to suggest, no matter when it was written.

We also asked readers to consider the rehashing of "All the Way Home." Over one-third of the responders did not know Southside Johnny's slow-ballad version recorded in 1991. But of those who had heard the South's interpretation of this Springsteen-penned tune almost half preferred it to Bruce's take. "The biggest disappointment... is this arrangement of 'All the Way Home.' The music and tempo completely work against the lyrics of the song. Give me the Southside treatment any day on this one!" writes Darrell Winch.

The craziest stat from this poll? One in every 15 people who filled this out—okay, that's only 6.5 percent, but think about fifteen of the best Springsteen fans you know, and unless they misunderstood the phrase "top of the heap," one of them—thinks that *Devils & Dust* is the greatest album Springsteen's ever done! Ever! That's pretty amazing, isn't it?

Needless to say, we really are a diverse group of fans, and our opinions are all over the map. We can be ridiculously difficult to please one minute and complete pushovers the next. But the passion, that's still going strong.

—Andrew E. Massimino

I think it made everyone remember a moment when they experienced the same isolation. Bruce's reworking of the song is useless. It doesn't improve on it in the least—it *ruins* the song.

Gregg McKenzie / Sardinia, OH

"Devils & Dust" is great, but it isn't about Iraq for me—it's related to *Tunnel of Love*. It is possible to be so full of fear (like Bill Horton in "Cautious Man") that you can stop feeling anything, and even while you are in a relationship with someone that you love, your mind can be full of nothing but angry, rejecting, critical stuff. Those are the devils and dust that I recognize.

Steve Baker / Holmfirth, England

The sound is great, so is the work of Brendan O'Brien. But the lyrics are much better than the music. This album deserves a Pulitzer Prize more than a Grammy award.

Luca Raimondo / Roma, Italy

My favorite part of the DVD side is listening to the entire album in 5.1 Surround Sound. I really love being able to read through the lyrics on my TV as the songs play, too. I think this is a very cool, intimate way to get to know the entire album rather than flipping through the liner notes (which requires my bifocals). The videos are my least favorite part of the DVD.

Brian Kuhlmann / Maynard, MA

I thought the 5.1 mix of the album (on the DVD) was pretty ordinary. Sounds like someone put the stereo master through a "set-and-forget" 5.1 plug-in. Nothing interesting happening in the rear channels besides a bit of reverb, and you can hear the compressors 'pumping' in the front channels, which is not evident on the CD.

Bruce Williams / NSW Australia

In mathematics, the sum gives back always the same result. But when we write about music (or we dance about architecture) things do not work the same way. Most of all in Springsteen records. In Bruce's works, the score is often bigger than the sum of single parts (the songs). Unfortunately, this is not the case here. The songs of *Devils & Dust*, taken one by one, are all valid ones. Three of them are quite above average, and one is really a masterpiece. But their sum—the album—is inferior to the hoped result. This is caused by the various origins of many songs—we got one outtake from '92, redone and corrected ("All The Way Home"), many phantoms with the same age of *The Ghost of Tom Joad* ("Long Time Comin'," "Silver Palomino," "Reno," "The Hitter," "Matamoros Banks") and some pieces written between 1999 and 2003 ("Devils & Dust," "Maria's Bed," "Jesus Was an Only Son.").

The difference between the three groups is obvious in the song structures, in the themes, and in some way the music. The result is a non-homogenous product that at times leaves the listener unconfident. There is no leading thread musically or poetically, like there was in all of Bruce's records since *Born to Run*. It seems that *D&D* is an experimental record that tries many paths, but it doesn't choose one, and in the end it's getting nowhere. My opinion is that the experiments are to be made in studio and you should release the album only when a precise direction has been taken.

Pietro Cafiero / Bresso (MI), Italy

Many critics have mistakenly labeled *Devils & Dust* as a successor to *Nebraska* and *Tom Joad*. In fact, it is the instrumentation and the lyrics on *Lucky Town* that are the true antecedents. Would "All the Way Home'" and "Maria's Bed" fit on *Nebraska* or *Tom Joad*? Not quite. On *Lucky Town*? Of course. ***Christopher McCabe / Los Angeles, CA***

I'm not a Bruce-twang enthusiast, and that vocal style when he employs it adds an unnecessary layer to weave through. I suppose I wouldn't mind it as much if it didn't make some of the songs inaudible. It just sounds false at times. That place of rawness and gut was where I first connected with Bruce's music. You could hear an ache in his voice (e.g. "Loose Ends," "Backstreets," "For You").

Once I heard the *Devils & Dust* material live and glanced over some lyric sheets, I finally felt the buzz in my soul that Bruce's music usually brings. But it was weird to have to wait for it. It took me almost a dozen spins of the record for it to sound and feel right with me. The music resonated immediately, but it was an odd experience to think, "I'm gonna love this one, once I get the words down!" And, I'm sorry to have to say this, but artistic license doesn't extend to the mispronunciation of "Orion!" I love this record, and I think the songwriting is up there with the best of his best.

Marietta Phillips / Anchorage, AK

For me, *Devils & Dust*, like *Tom Joad* before it, is good for my balance as an American citizen. My father was a police officer, as am I. I have regular dealings with illegal (or undocumented) immigrants in southern Maryland. The songs on *D&D* (like *Joad*) really help keep my thoughts in check when my conservative upbringing starts to take over. On "Matamoros Banks," I am constantly reminded that the only thing I ever did to earn my right to live in this county and call it my own was simply being born here. Bruce certainly has thrown a lot of questions into the wind during this release, and they keep me great company while I am patrolling my beat at 3 a.m.

When I am dealing with an immigrant from El Salvador who speaks no English and is afraid of being sent back to a poverty-stricken nation, I hear the voice of the guy from "Matamoros Banks." For me, this song is a constant reminder for me not to have the attitude "why don't they just put a wall up around this country and not let anyone else in," or "Everyone should have to speak English" or "Why don't you go back to your own country?" I consider it a blessing for Bruce to have moved out to L.A. and spent so much time in the Southwest. Even though I sometimes miss hearing new songs about New Jersey, his father, cars, girls, escape, etc., it is so rewarding to have such a great collection of songs about an America that an East Coast listener rarely has the opportunity to visit.

Steven Pascali / Damascus, MD

Although people are raving about the title track, I find it weakest among the stories on the album. Perhaps Americans relate to it more than I do, but I find it a bit like "American Skin (41 Shots)," which had more analogies than a structure per se. And even that had something of a narrative. Don't get me wrong, I love both songs; I love the way he lets the band kick in on "Devils & Dust," I love his point-blank way of singing. I just find it much weaker than the other songs on the album. I haven't been in the position of many of the characters Bruce has written about, but have empathized with most. The characters in "Devils & Dust" aren't them. The song is accurate, but doesn't move me.

Ananda Ray / Mumbai, India

The primary success of *Devils & Dust* is the production of Brendan O'Brien. He brings additional players and instruments to prevent the sparse and vacant wasteland that was most of *Tom Joad*, while allowing Bruce to still have the intimate acoustic record he wanted. This record is no *Nebraska*, but that is an awfully high standard to recapture.

Colin Dale / Trenton, ON, Canada

Magnificent, a thing of fragile, glass-like beauty—he has become pure instrument. He is cool, clear water in the parched desert that is the present American landscape, and I just don't care how corny that sounds. *Devils & Dust* is perfect.

Ellie Deegan / Cambridge, MA

Good little album. ***Mike Minervini / Niagara Falls, ON, Canada***

Right: Clinch, photographed by Bruce Springsteen

DANNY CLINCH

IN HIS OWN WORDS

As told to Tim Donnelly

Danny Clinch knows just how lucky he is, just ask him. But the acclaimed rock photographer isn't just lucky, he's got talent to burn. He's played harmonica with Phish and Blind Melon, and he's blowing his harp on the new Foo Fighters record. Neil Young and Bob Dylan love his eye. Eddie Vedder loves his unobtrusive style. James Hetfield of Metallica calls him "the fly on the wall you don't want to crush." Bruce Springsteen believes in the ability of the kid from the neighborhood.

Clinch, who has been photographing Springsteen regularly since 1999 and recently directed the DVD portion of the *Devils & Dust* DualDisc, grew up on the Jersey Shore, in Toms River. Like many of his ilk (age 41), he cruised the dusty beach roads, drinking warm beer, barefoot on the hood of a Dodge.

Like Springsteen, Clinch hasn't left the hood, where he continues to draw artistic inspiration from his family and from surfing and playing music with his friends.

He's as Jersey as Jersey gets, likes his pizza crust thin, roots for the Giants come Sunday, and will pump his own gas when in a hurry.

"The first record I won on the Seaside Heights boardwalk as a young kid was *Born to Run*," laughs Clinch. "So to think that I was going to have a Bruce Springsteen record with my photographs in it is amazing."

He's honest and upfront and will tell you straight away that his family means more to him than anything. His wife Maria jokes that she dreads the day that her husband and Bruce "break up."

It's these important things that have drawn the two together, the artist and the subject. Like many of the photographers Springsteen has chosen to work with, the images speak volumes. With Clinch, this vital stage of Springsteen's career has been documented with love and sincere artistic sensibility.

Backstreets spoke with the super-busy Clinch from the passenger seat while he drove in the northbound express lane of the coast-to-the-city route, AKA the Garden State Parkway. —*T.D.*

On getting to work with Springsteen in 1999

I sent two *Discovery Inn* books to Bruce and Sandy Choron [Springsteen's longtime art director] at Sony. Sandy brought one down to rehearsal down at Fort Monmouth. I had a little note in there saying that I was from Jersey, Exit 82, and if you ever need any photographs and someone to shoot some pictures, give me a shout.

She liked it and decided to give it to Bruce at Fort Monmouth. He looked through the book and really liked it and said, "Ask this guy if he wants to come down and take some pictures."

In the meantime, I told my parents that I sent my book to Bruce Springsteen, and joking around I said, "I'm sure he's gonna call me Tuesday and have me come down and shoot some pictures." I was totally joking.

Tuesday morning, I get a phone call—but it's not from the Landau people or Bruce. It was Bob Dylan's management, and he said, "I represent a singer-songwriter named Bob Dylan. Larry Jenkins [Dylan's publicist at the time] says you are the guy to shoot Bob Dylan." I was like, "Wow, Larry is a genius. I agree with him one-hundred precent."

So later that day I had a meeting at MTV, and I'm telling these people the story—about telling my folks about Bruce calling me and Bob Dylan called instead. I'm in the meeting and my phone rings, and it's Sandy Choron saying, "Can you come down on Thursday and shoot some pictures?"

It was Tuesday, March 16, 1999. March 16th is now a national holiday at the Danny Clinch Studio.

On the Jersey kid building a relationship with the Boss

I went down for two or three days, shot rehearsal and took portraits of the band members; everyone else was easy to get because they had a lot of down time, but it was tough getting five minutes with Bruce. That's when I took one of my favorites—the one with him looking in the mirror. We hit it off. He started taking pictures of me—I have a photograph that he took that I really like. That started the relationship. They did the tour and the HBO special, and I did all the photos in the packaging for that.

Now, they give me a laminate at the start of the tour, where I can drop in whenever I want. I always bring my camera, but there are times when I go and watch the show and other times I am feeling it and shoot; often though, it usually is very casual.

On shooting Springsteen & the E Street Band live for the first time, and now

There was so much going on. I just kept shooting, shooting and shooting. It was so intense. I finally had to settle myself and pick and choose, because I had ten rolls of spent film in my pocket about a third of the way through the show.

The idea was getting a shot with the whole band, and one of the things I started to do was mount a camera with a wide-angle lens on the drum kit facing the audience, because I know he turns around a lot and faces Max. I did end up getting some pretty bad-ass shots doing that.

It's all about capturing a great moment, when you are shooting a live concert; how do you position yourself to get that great moment? What's your point of view?

When he did the *Rising* tour, [guitar tech] Kevin Buell would come up through a stairway through the back of the stage to where the band is. I made sure it was okay with Bruce that I could go up that little stairway and be behind Bruce and see the faces in the audience.

I often don't stand in front of the lead singer, because that's the shot that everybody gets. If I can get up and stand up on the side of the stage and shoot across, or get behind the stage and shoot out towards the audience, you definitely get the shot from a lesser-known perspective. My favorite spot to shoot a band is behind the drum kit. That's my spot.

On the making of the "Countin' on a Miracle" video

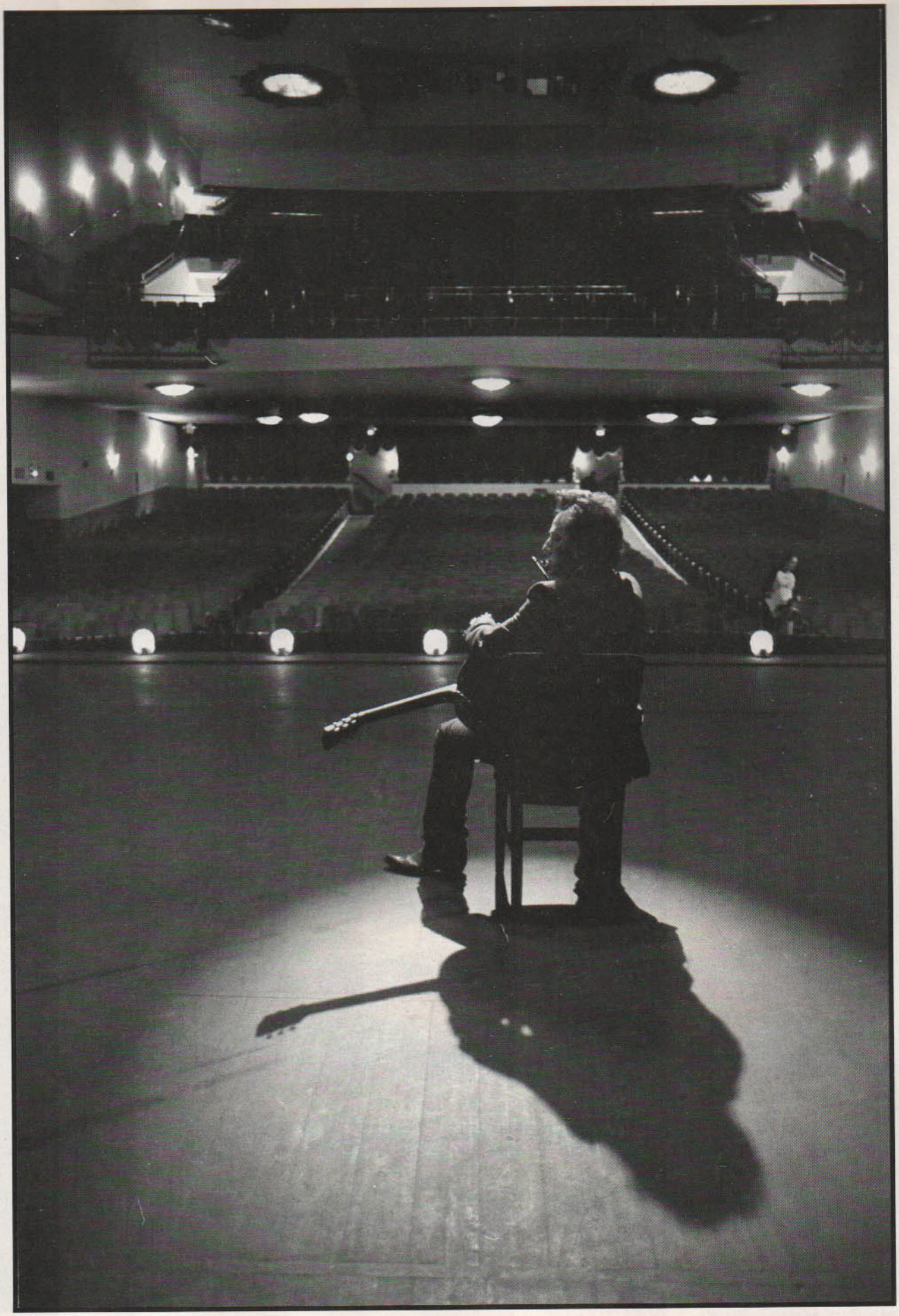
It was down in Atlanta at the [Southern Tracks] studio, and I was told if I didn't point the camera at Brendan O'Brien, it was cool. So there I was in the studio, walking on eggshells—I was a little nervous about it, because I really wanted to come through and document the process. I was shooting stills, and on the third day I didn't have too many moving images; I made a concerted effort to shoot video on my Super 8 camera. I wanted to come away with something special, so I asked Bruce if he would mind playing the guitar so I could film it.

So he sat down with his guitar, pulled out the slide and started to play this country-blues version of "Countin' on a Miracle." I shot the whole thing, and he floored me and my assistant, Hannah. I didn't realize he was going to play a whole song. I was hoping to get some stuff to cut away, b-roll whatever. He totally floored us. But then I realized that I didn't have any audio going—it was Super 8 with no audio.

This is one of those decisions in my life that I'm so glad that I made. I turned to Hannah and said that I need to ask him to do it again. Bruce Springsteen. And I have to ask him to do this again. I was sweating big time.

So, I went downstairs, and I was walking in circles for a while, and I finally went over and asked him, "Is there any chance you can come back up and do it again?" I told him I needed to shoot it again with my other camera that had audio. He looked at me like, *I'm kinda busy.* I said to him, "Believe me, I wouldn't ask you to do this if I didn't think we could do something cool." He was like, "Okay, we'll do it in a couple of minutes." We shot it again, so we cut back and forth with the Super 8.

We cut it together in two hours and sent it out. Out of all the stuff we shot, Dave Marsh saw it and told Bruce it was really cool and he should show it after the show. So they started to play the little film at every stop on the *Rising* tour. Seeing it at Madison Square Garden was unbelievable. That set the stage for *Devils & Dust.*



On the Devils & Dust DualDisc

I got a phone call from Barbara Carr saying that Bruce was going to make a DualDisc and wanted to know "if you want to come out to the farm and shoot some songs for the record like you did for 'Countin' on a Miracle.'"

Bruce said, "Lets' do five or six songs off the record." I told him I'd like to shoot it in a little farmhouse on his property. So we rolled in there with three 16mm cameras and a Bolex, the old hand-crank number, and set up a really simple corner for him to play these songs in and keep it as low key as we possibly could.

We shot a really, nice, warm and intimate situation. One thing I have noticed about him is when a guy like Bruce Springsteen picks up a guitar, there is no half-assing it. He picks it up and means everything he says with it. He blew us away with what he did. A couple songs we did two takes on, and Toby Scott was there doing sound.

The background vocals were added afterwards and were done by the Springsteen family: Patti and the kids. They put in some subtle keyboards as well. At first when I heard it was going down, I really wasn't for it—not like it's my decision. But I really love it, because the voices give the feeling that the house is haunted. It was an empty room with all these mirrors with reflections, so at any moment you can go by these mirrors and see a ghost.

On interviewing the Boss

Although I am not an interviewer, I enjoy a good conversation. I felt if I got him started he'd pretty much answer all of my questions and probably ask the questions.

The question that he said was too broad ["Talk about how listening to and playing music has affected your life"] was the first question that I asked him. It was broad because, not really being an experienced interviewer, I didn't want to get to the specifics right away. I had hoped that whatever I said would open up some dialogue and go in a direction. It was funny, and he started laughing.

The first cut we did [for the DualDisc] was fairly intense and serious, but he wanted to include that—a lighter moment—because that is such a part of him. A lot of it is so serious, so I was glad he did that.

He was strumming the whole time I interviewed him, so what he was playing during the interview turned out to be this wonderful ambient background music.

"When a guy like Bruce Springsteen picks up a guitar, there is no half-assing it."

On the "Devils & Dust" video

Again, I got a phone call from Barbara Carr. There were two songs they were considering for the single, "All I'm Thinkin' About" and of course, "Devils & Dust."

They approached me about cutting a video from the stuff I shot at the farmhouse. They wanted to know if it would match up, sync with the way the song is done on the record. It didn't—quite frankly, if it was some young band, it would have been matched up, it was possible. But for Bruce Springsteen, it just wasn't cutting it.

We thought about going back to the farmhouse or shooting the same sort of thing somewhere else. We came to the conclusion that if we were getting to shoot somewhere else we should make it its own thing, and it was decided that "Devils & Dust" would be the single.

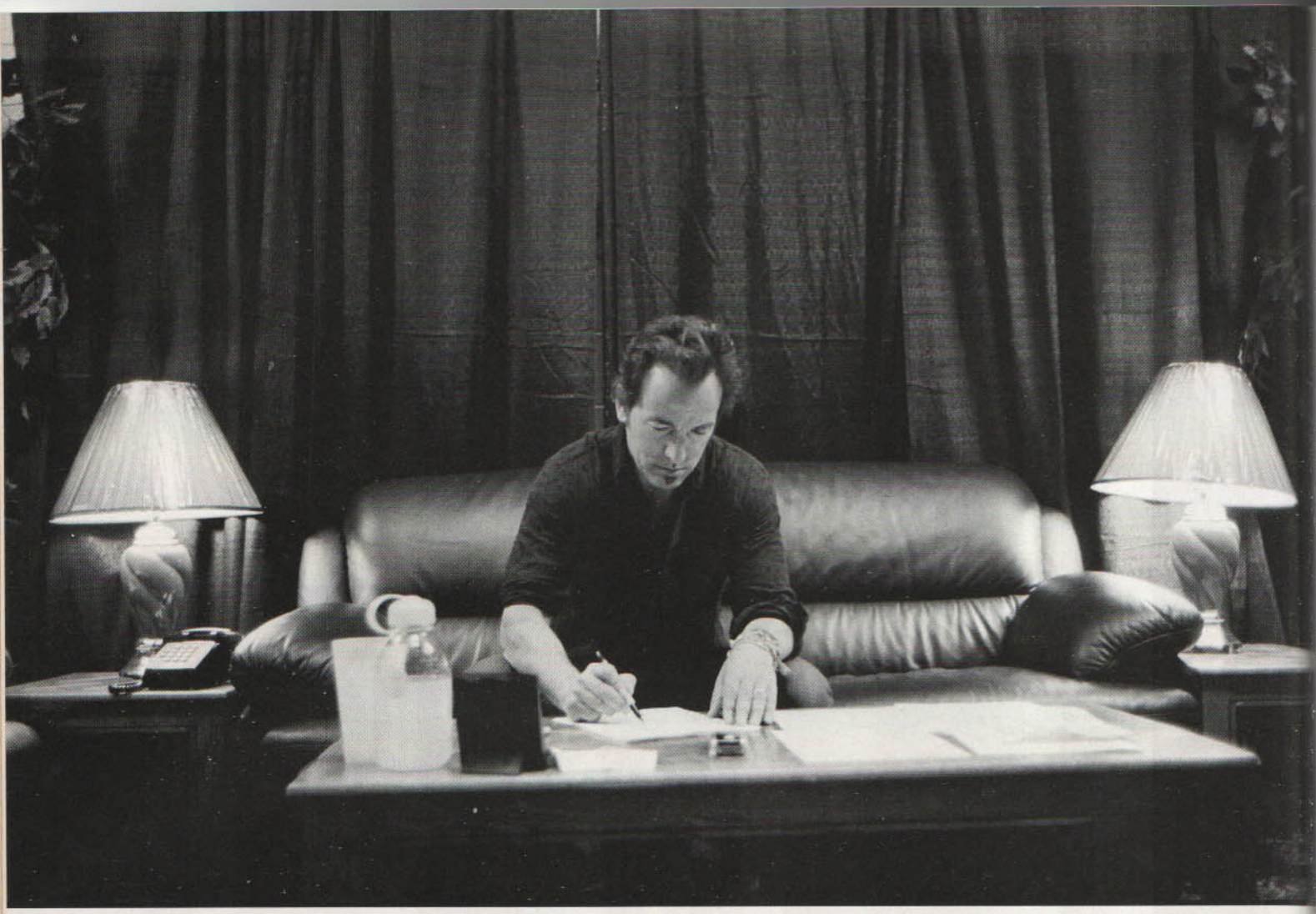
My treatment for the video included going to the Paramount and shooting it there. I thought it would be really cool to do it in an old theater. I thought that the Paramount was the perfect place. It's an old theater, it's close to Bruce, but I didn't want to do just because it was in Asbury Park, I wanted to do it because it was a cool old theater, which happens to be in Asbury Park.

Bruce liked it, got Toby Scott to come out, and we shot it in an afternoon. Bruce doesn't like to lip-sync; he'd rather have it be the real deal. So we played the backing track, and Bruce played his guitar, harmonica and his vocal live. What was so cool about the shoot is that he was giving a heart-felt and sincere performance on every single take, 150 percent, the whole time.

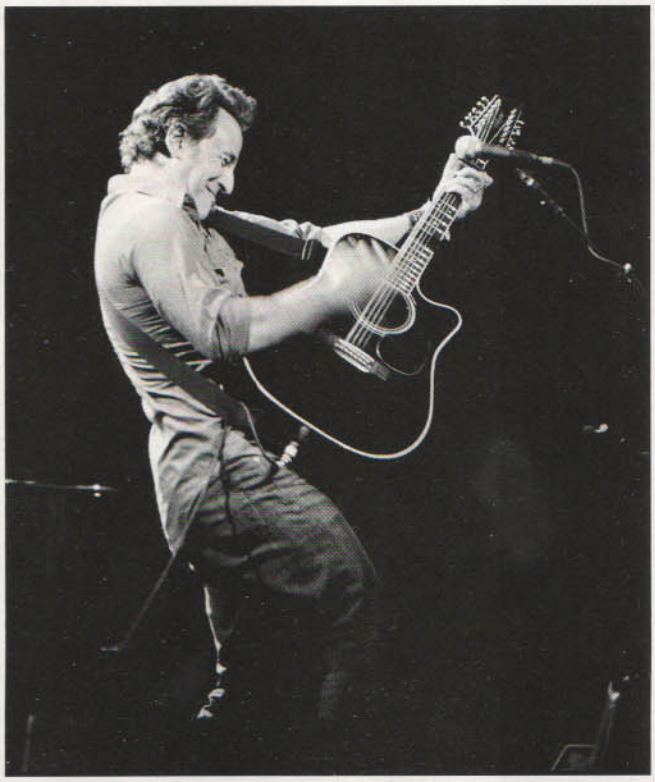
To be hanging on the stage, bullshitting between takes, and just talking about music was pretty amazing. I had a picture of James Brown that I took at the Grammys and brought it to show Bruce. He started laughing, and starting asking who came before James Brown. He started going off on what a pioneer he was. He kept asking who was James Brown, before James Brown was James Brown. There wasn't one.

We started talking about Little Richard and Jackie Wilson. He came out and started playing "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag" on his acoustic, dancing around while he was doing it.

He is always strumming his guitar, always playing it. He's picking and strumming the whole time he's talking.



"It was a challenge to hold off when it was quiet yet visually amazing."



On capturing the Devils & Dust tour

The very first thing that pops in my mind is what everybody hears at the beginning of the show: "Turn your cell phones off, don't leave your seat," all that stuff. He didn't want to hear any cameras going off when he was playing. It was a challenge to hold off when it was quiet yet visually amazing. So I would shoot while people were clapping, or when he was doing a big guitar part.

It was easier to maneuver backstage, though. Often they let me come in and shoot a photograph while he's doing the set list. I just get in there and take the picture because it's relevant. He lets me know if he needs time, and of course *[laughs]*, I listen to his request.

THE LONG AND

DAVID EVANS PHOTO

Seen a man standin' over a dead dog...

Bathed in an eerie glow of bluish light, Bruce Springsteen stood *sans* guitar, harmonica cradled, as he sang into a bullet mic that distorted his voice beyond recognition. It might have seemed bluesy if you were sitting in the front few rows, but to most of us in the audience it was a good thing we could see our man Bruce up there or we wouldn't have believed our own ears. As he stomped and hollered and huffed and puffed his way through "Reason to Believe" many in the crowd were scratching their heads, even as their jaws were dropping. Ultimately, the effect of the song's performance was more impressive than it was frustrating. But the immediate message of the song's content seemed to be secondary to Springsteen's own message to his audience—the night would be on his terms, so prepare to be challenged. And that, my dear fellow fans, is how this tour *started:* "Reason to Believe" set the tone for a dynamic, unpredictable show that had Springsteen reinterpreting old songs, delivering nuanced versions of newer ones, and expanding familiar themes while pushing himself in new musical directions.

The *Devils & Dust* "Solo & Acoustic" shows are so unlike anything that Bruce has done before, that comparisons to past tours evoke more contrasts than parallels. Way back in late April when this tour set sail, all we really knew was that Springsteen would be playing solo in support of his new record. It wasn't exactly uncharted waters. He was set to play theaters and concert halls and a few draped-off arenas, and most expected something similar to his 1995-97 tour supporting *Tom Joad.* On its surface, this tour has much in common with that outing—from the stark, one-man-troubadour nature of the show, to his nightly request for silence, to the arrangement of "The Promised Land" that punctuates each night with a slap on the guitar. But while comparisons to the *Tom Joad* tour are unavoidable, for the most part they merely demonstrate how far Springsteen has traveled since the last time he toured alone.

DUSTY ROAD

By ANDREW MASSIMINO and MAGNUS LAUGLO

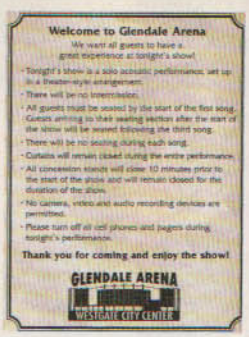
DEVILS & DUST
Solo & Acoustic Tour 2005

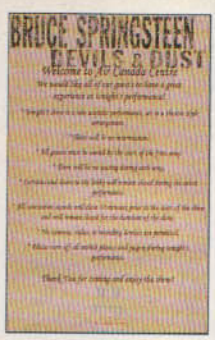
LEG 1
U.S.A.
April 25 - May 20

LEG 2
Europe
May 24 - June 28

LEG 3
North America
July 13 - August 13

Tour reports compiled by MAGNUS LAUGLO
Transcriptions by MARK STRICHERZ





For a better comparison one should look even further back than *Joad*, to the Christic Institute benefit shows more than 15 years ago, when an unsettled and introspective Springsteen took to the stage alone and re-energized himself and his audience by opening up like never before. Though never officially released, copies of those two shows began circulating quickly, and fans were excited over Springsteen's bold step after a tumultuous few years. He played piano publicly for the first time in more than a dozen years, unveiled new arrangements of his back catalog, and debuted six new songs to a stunned Los Angeles crowd. More than that, he started peeling off the layers of how we knew Bruce Springsteen. His stories, over those two November nights in 1990, were compelling, deeply personal and somewhat jarring. When an overexcited fan yelled out in the quiet, "We love you, Bruce!" Springsteen felt obliged to respond, "But you don't really know me."

Whether or not we know the man any better this time out is anyone's guess. But we do know Bruce Springsteen, the performer... or at least we thought we did. The musical range that Springsteen brought to the stage for the *Devils & Dust* tour has been nothing short of phenomenal. We'd seen his turns at piano on the reunion and *Rising* tours. But those really didn't prepare us for the spectacle of watching Springsteen methodically work the pump organ or caress that fragile electric piano this go round. The number of different instruments Springsteen incorporated into this show is amazing for a guy who seemed to play the same guitar for almost ten years of his working life. Bruce has quite simply redefined for his audience what an "acoustic" performance can be, with many different sounds and voices presented over the course of the evening.

And with all the instrument switching, foot stomping, and vocal experimentation it's a far more active and dynamic show than *Joad* ever was. The performances have been exciting, artistically ambitious, unpredictable and downright fun. Fan Robert Barany described the new tour as "a Technicolor version of the *Tom Joad* shows, which were black & white... mainly black!" Of course, there is a flip-side argument to be made. Because they were so thematically driven, those dark *Joad* shows had a certain uncompromising focus. Writes Stefano Speroni: "I must admit I've got mixed feelings about this tour. Bruce is going from piano to guitar to banjo to pump organ to electric piano, but I think this show lacks the intensity and cohesion the *Ghost of Tom Joad* tour shows had." Whatever the *Devils & Dust* tour lacks in focus can probably be traced back to the record itself, which is Springsteen's most thematically sprawling album since *The River*. If there is a recurring theme of the show it revolves around peace—the struggle to find it in the world, in our communities, and within ourselves.

THE MOST WELCOME SURPRISE OF THE tour has been the extent to which the setlists themselves have changed nightly. On the lengthy *Joad* tour, setlists changed comparatively little from night to night, even after over a year on the road. Springsteen took pains to make it clear from the outset that this "Solo & Acoustic" tour wasn't going to be a greatest hits parade, warning that he would not, for instance, be playing an acoustic version of "Thunder Road." But as for what he *would* play, never before has a tour yielded so much setlist variation. Only four months into the tour, Springsteen had played more than 100 different songs. Many are from the late-'80s to mid-'90s, an era which has been largely neglected on the last two E Street band tours. While many fans applauded getting to hear a classic rarity like "Incident on 57th Street" on the piano, what really began blowing the setlist geeks away as the first leg got going were unlikely choices like "Cautious Man," "Stolen Car," "A Good Man is Hard to Find (Pittsburgh)," and "Iceman."

Soldiering on through Europe, Springsteen kept pulling them out: "Open All Night," "Fade Away," "Walk Like a Man"; by the time he returned to the States in July, it seemed like the unexpected had become the expected. Tickets for many of these performances were relatively easy to come by, a phenomenon not always enjoyed by Bruce Springsteen fans, much less by those visiting smaller capacity venues. And it seemed like Bruce's earlier strong performances in home bases like Philadelphia and Boston were being outdone on an almost nightly basis. Bruce pulled out rare *Tracks* gems like "Cynthia" and "Sad Eyes" alongside classic E Street Band live staples—"Backstreets," "Prove it All Night"—that few had anticipated at a solo show. He eventually gave the standard show opener "My Beautiful Reward" a rest and experimented with a slew of different openers. One of the most welcome surprises of the tour was Springsteen's rediscovery of the *Tunnel of Love* album: by mid-August, every song from that album had been played at least once. Of course, with so many songs coming in and out of the setlist on a nightly basis, something had to give, and ultimately the *Devils & Dust* material got scaled back to around six songs.

ASIDE FROM SHORT-TERM TECHNICAL problems on specific nights, the sound quality overall was remarkable, even as the tour left the theater setting. Bringing the uncharacteristically rich stage dressing to the arena stage—textured curtains, a pair of chandeliers, an antique lamp—warmed the place up a bit, and of course Springsteen is legendary for his ability to make the larger halls seem small. Bruce made a point to politely ask for quiet at the beginning of each show, but the extent to which the audience played along depended on a variety of factors. Springsteen tried multiple approaches, including stopping concession sales during the show, distributing fliers of "house rules" before the performance, not allowing people to walk to and from their seats in the middle of songs, adjusting tempo to throw off the audience's clapping, repeatedly requesting silence and even admonishing the crowd or particularly unruly audience members. Ironically, the most disruptive moments came as a result of one of those infrequent sound problems rather than rowdy concertgoers (see 5/19 at the Meadowlands, for a particularly ugly misunderstanding).

In any case, the vast majority of performances saw Springsteen in strong spirits, making humorous comments from the stage and engaging his audience. Whether by shaking hands with fans or just thanking them for coming to the show, he always made an effort to reach out and connect. Frank Lafond and his ten-year-old son James got more than a handshake early in the tour in Glendale, when Bruce handed James a harmonica he had used that night. Lafond remembers the moment almost ecstatically: "This is a memory for James for the rest of his life." Frank and James's story is not a one-off incident—Bruce made connections like this with fans every night.

He also routinely played song requests from fans, more than ever before. As the tour continued, it wasn't unusual for Springsteen to send a

JONATHAN BAJEK PHOTO

ALAN CHITLIK PHOTO

And I come out, and I'm giving, and I'm giving, and I'm giving, and I keep giving, and I give some more, and I make a simple request. I say, hey, could I possibly have a *blue spot?*

handful of songs out to folks in the crowd over the course of a night. Such requests usually came from chance meetings between concerts or outside the venue before a show.

Tobias Grönberg recalls his chance meeting with Bruce before the show in Gothenburg: "Bruce signed a lot of records, but he walked by me and my *Devils & Dust* booklet. So I asked to his back, 'Bruce, would you please, please play "Fade Away" tonight or Saturday for us Swedish fans?' Then the unimaginable happened—he turned back to me and said, '"Fade Away"? You know, I haven't played that song for a long, long, long time....'"

It had been 24 years, in fact, but Springsteen played "Fade Away" that evening. Well done, Tobias.

Springsteen enjoys tremendous popularity in Europe, where a slightly younger overall audience can provide particularly attentive and energetic crowds. Bruce seems to have accepted the long-standing "stage-rush" tradition as a cultural phenomenon. (And later, back in North America, fans were more than happy to continue the practice.) Kicking off the European leg in Dublin, Bruce quickly found his raconteur footing, cracking risky political and religious jokes, yet prompting raucous applause. Fans in Spain and Italy lived up to their usual exuberant selves, and if they weren't as quiet as Bruce might have liked, he seems to have a true appreciation for Mediterranean culture (being half Italian himself). Germany was graced with a generous five concerts and a short snippet of a traditional German polka in the middle of "Ramrod." When he played Stockholm on the night of the Swedish Midsummer festival, Bruce had the crowd singing the Swedish drinking song "Helan Går," which he had clearly picked up on from previous Midsummer visits. Far more than superficial details, these gestures are part of Springsteen's active efforts to embrace the cultures of the countries he visits.

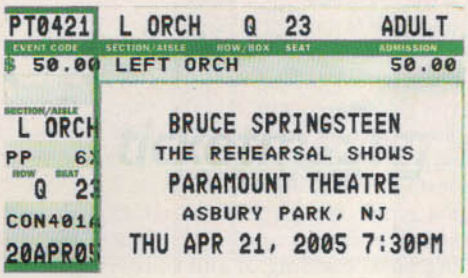
Bruce made a particular point of speaking the language of every country he visited, and frequently more than just a few generic "Good evening, (fill in blank)"-type lines. In an age where many non-Americans increasingly feel alienated and threatened by what may be interpreted as American disregard for anything but its own interests, appreciating the indirect but implicit politics in this kind of simple gesture is key to understanding the impact of the *Devils & Dust* tour. Writing from Germany, Karl Birthistle comments: "It is to his enormous credit that he speaks every evening in the national tongue of wherever he plays. He spoke in fine German in Munich; in Rotterdam he worked very hard to pronounce some very basic Dutch to ask for quiet so that he could give us his best, in a very good phonetic delivery. It is a testament to his integrity and his professionalism and plain, simple, good manners that he prepares his words in the relevant tongue each evening, and I believe he earns a tremendous amount of respect for this."

Also lending to the intimacy of the tour, Springsteen rediscovered his penchant for storytelling—a much-loved element of his shows over the years, and one which had been largely missing since the last acoustic tour. Springsteen's stories have always illuminated the songs they precede and relied on humor and reflection in equal doses. Bruce's increasing understanding of and comfort with his Catholic identity has added new layers to ideas he's addressed his whole career, and his explorations of parent-child relationships now has him mining from the other end of the shaft. What struck me about his stories this time around was how, more than ever before, he was talking about universal and familiar experiences that large portions of the audience could surely relate to: bringing up teenage kids, searching for an understanding of spirituality that one can call one's own, trying to get laid.

In fact, coming on the heels of the Vote for Change tour, many fans had been anticipating an album and tour with a more significant political angle. But just as the title song about a soldier stationed in Iraq keeps within the politically neutral personal sphere, Springsteen refrained from using the new tour to focus on partisan politics. The one notable exception was the *Tunnel* tour staple "Part Man, Part Monkey" performed on a semi-regular basis as a vehicle to criticize the renewed attacks on teaching evolution in American schools.

FOUR MONTHS INTO THIS TOUR AS OF this writing, the meaning behind those distorted words on "Reason to Believe" has grown clearer. On May 11, at Chicago's Rosemont Theatre, Springsteen added a song at the end of the show that hasn't left the setlist since. It's a cover of the band Suicide's "Dream Baby Dream," an inspiring song that is—as Springsteen performs it—at times lonely, some nights joyful, and most nights redemptive. At the end of every hard-earned show there is a reason to believe that things can get better if we just "keep the fire burnin'." As Springsteen leaves the pump organ to finish the song at the front of the stage, he stares longingly at his audience, and seemingly right at me. "I just wanna see you smile," he repeats as mantra. It's as close and "in concert" with Springsteen as I've ever felt.

Back in 1990, after the Christic Shows and with rumors of a new record on the way, many were hoping for a tour that resembled those two fabled nights in L.A. Springsteen the artist had been searching for a way to move forward and connect with his audience in a very raw and emotionally direct way. Many felt that the 1992-93 tour that followed fell short of that promise. But 15 years after that glimpse of possibility, the *Devils & Dust* tour takes the blueprint and delivers the goods. A more confident and assured solo artist, Bruce Springsteen is still ready to challenge and take risks, and night after night he's found a way to do that while drawing an already rapt audience even closer. It's been a long time coming, for sure. And now it's here.



APRIL 21 – 22
PARAMOUNT THEATRE
ASBURY PARK, NJ

ATTENDANCE: 1,600

4/21 SETLIST: Devils & Dust/Youngstown/Lonesome Day/Black Cowboys/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/For You*/Tougher Than the Rest*/Part Man, Part Monkey/Maria's Bed/Highway Patrolman/Used Cars/Further On (Up the Road)/My Hometown*/Lost in the Flood*/The Rising/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//This Hard Land/My Best Was Never Good Enough/The Promised Land

4/21 NOTES: A benefit for World Hunger Year, Bruce's first of two rehearsal shows gives fans a good indication of the feel of the upcoming tour, playing nine songs from *Devils & Dust* (five of which are live premieres) as well as some surprises in the selection of older material. In addition to his acoustic guitar and harmonica, he plays piano on five songs and brings out an electric guitar for "Part Man, Part Monkey." Rediscovering his penchant for storytelling, Springsteen prefaces many songs with extended introductions.

IN THE AUDIENCE: Bruce's family, John Eddie, Jesse Malin, Garland Jeffries, Willie Nile, sportscaster Kurt Menefee.

PRESS: "IT'S BRUCE ALMIGHTY IN AN ACOUSTIC TWIST." David Hinckley in the *New York Daily News:* Bruce Springsteen went back to the Jersey Shore last night to tell his most loyal fans that it was time for another round of "shut up and listen." Perhaps because he said it in a firm but loving way, they did....

Devils & Dust provided the backbone of last night's show... and the resulting evening was as different from the 2002-2003 *The Rising* tour as "Born to Run" is from "Pony Boy." Aside from "The Rising" itself, the setlist represented an almost total turnover from the last tour. His slow, acoustic version of his classic "The Promised Land" would have made Bob Dylan proud.

KEY
★ grand piano
★★ pump organ
★★★ electric piano
★★★★ banjitar
Tour premiere

All attendance counts are approximate

Although last night's show was officially labeled a "rehearsal," Springsteen was in good voice. He looked trim and has clearly honed both his guitar playing and vocals....

THE GHOST OF THE STFU TOUR: Coming onto the stage he joked, "The *Tom Joad* rules are still in effect! No cell phones! No stupid jingles when I'm playing my songs—I need to concentrate up here. Well, it's rehearsal night, so we'll give this a try..."

"Used Cars" was preceded by an absolutely hilarious story about his father's love of cars. The Springsteen family never owned new cars, and one in particular could not go in reverse, so they had to make sure it was parked so that they could drive it forward from the parking space. It also had no muffler, so whenever they saw the cops on the side of the road, his father would turn off the engine and coast by, hoping not to get a ticket for the loud exhaust sounds. —*"The Magic Rat" and "The Barefoot Girl"*

4/22 SETLIST: Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Youngstown/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/For You*/Real World*/Part Man, Part Monkey/Maria's Bed/Highway Patrolman/Reno/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Waitin' on a Sunny Day/Bobby Jean/The Promised Land

4/22 NOTES: The second rehearsal show is a rare afternoon show and a benefit for local charities. Bruce debuts a radically reworked "Reason to Believe" to open the show and dedicates "Racing in the Street" to longtime fan Obie (who, Bruce revealed, helped him choose between two possible endings for the song). The controversial "Reno" premieres, and the fan-favorite, long-lost piano version of "Real World" resurfaces for the first time since the 1990 Christic Institute benefit shows.

THESE BLUES I'VE FOUND: Bruce signaled that this would be a different experience with his very first song, performing "Reason to Believe" accompanying himself on just harmonica and stomping on the floor. Deep breaths in and out on the harmonica, then a couple lines of the song through the [harmonica's bullet mic] to distort his voice, then more harmonica, and on and on and on. Last year I spent a great weekend exploring the blues music of the Mississippi Delta and Memphis, and this performance brought me back to a 1920s juke joint as I imagined an old blues master doing his thing. I can't say I liked the song, but I got the message. —*Jerry Birenz*

SPIRIT IN THE NIGHT: I can't say enough about the lighting for the show. The colors ranged from blues, purples, greens, reds, orange, yellow, and tie-dye and swirly/cloudy effects. Absolutely exquisite, and somewhat of a surprise. It didn't even seem like a rehearsal at all to me. Bruce was polished and very well-rehearsed in my opinion. Other rehearsal shows I've seen before were much more loose and fun, and although there was some fun and lightheartedness tonight, too, the word that I'd use to describe the overall feel was *spiritual.* —*Linda Iorio*

LEG 1
U.S.A., April 25 - May 20

APRIL 25
FOX THEATRE
DETROIT, MI

ATTENDANCE: 5,000

SETLIST: Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Youngstown/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/For You*/Real World*/Part Man, Part Monkey/Maria's Bed/Highway Patrolman/Black Cowboys/Reno/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//This Hard Land/Waitin' on a Sunny Day/My Best Was Never Good Enough/The Promised Land

NOTES: Opening night in Detroit follows closely the model of the Asbury rehearsal shows. "Youngstown" is dedicated to Audioslave's Tommy Morello, who was present for the early portion of the show before popping next door to play his own gig at the State Theatre.

PRESS: Gary Graff in *Billboard:* ...Wearing jeans and a black shirt, sleeves rolled up and buttons opened to the middle of his chest, Springsteen started the show with just a harmonica and his foot stomping out the beat to "Reason to Believe" from his 1982 *Nebraska* album, singing into the harmonica microphone for a spectral, rustic effect accented by falsetto yelps and yodels. It was the first of many drastically different versions of his songs....

Though similar in conception to the *Tom Joad* show, Springsteen's new solo presentation had more of an upbeat tone than its predecessor. Even without the band that performed them on the album, some of the new *Devils & Dust* songs—"Long Time Comin'," "Maria's Bed," "Leah"—retained their easygoing vibrancy even in this more austere setting. And in general the repertoire, which eschewed top-selling albums such as *Born to Run, The River* and *Born in the U.S.A.*, had the feel of a recitation hand-picked and carefully crafted to present if not a single point, an overall philosophy of approach to composing and performing....

The whole show was the kind that will stick, too. A far cry from the rocking extravaganzas he does with the E Street Band, the *Devils & Dust* tour opener was Springsteen in the raw, a stark

MIKE BEDER PHOTO

and brave exhibition of the creative being at the core of one of rock's most accomplished artists.

IN THE WINK OF A YOUNG GIRL'S EYE: A fit-looking Boss Man took the stage in the Motor City last night and did not disappoint. I think the *Joad* tour prepped the good folks in terms of knowing that solo acoustic does not equal screaming "Born to Run" at the stage. There was some of that, but in general a very respectful bunch. The graying ponytail set that spends their Saturdays combing campus area record stores for LP needles had their moments, but this night was about new and recent material.

Make no mistake, the piano is the highlight of this tour. We all couldn't wait for him to sit down at it again. "Real World" took us back to the Christic shows. "Jesus Was an Only Son" was wonderful until he stopped to talk before the last verse. (I don't like my tunes interrupted. If I want that, I'll watch *Storytellers* again.) Two and a half hours went by in seconds. The quickest-longest Bruce show I've ever attended. —*Doug Baker*

APRIL 28
NOKIA THEATRE AT GRAND PRAIRIE
DALLAS, TX

ATTENDANCE: 6,000

SETLIST: Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Youngstown/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/For You*/Two Faces*/Part Man, Part Monkey/Galveston Bay/Maria's Bed/Reno/Real World*/My Hometown*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Oklahoma Hills (with Jimmy LaFave)/Waitin' on a Sunny Day/My Best Was Never Good Enough/The Promised Land

NOTES: The location-appropriate "Galveston Bay" is played for the first time since the *Joad* tour. Guest Jimmy LaFave joins in for a rare cover of the Woody & Jack Guthrie song "Oklahoma Hills." On the setlist but not played: "Lost in the Flood."

PRESS: "SPRINGSTEEN'S SUBJECT MATTER FAMILIAR, SONGS NOT." Thor Christensen in the *Dallas Morning News:* ... Serious and challenging—with tons of unfamiliar tunes—it was a show for hard-core Bruce fans, not the folks dying to hear "Dancing in the Dark."

Four boozy young fans near the front of the stage actually bolted halfway through the two-hour-and-15-minute show, muttering about the absence of the E Street Band. But it was their loss.

Amid all dour tales about "people whose souls are at risk"—as he described the *Devils* tunes—there was no shortage of great music, like his gorgeous Spanish guitar playing in "Palomino" or the ghostly near-falsetto he used on several tunes....

Yet it was most definitely not a greatest-hits concert. During the new tune "Maria's Bed," he pretended he had a full band and yelled: "C'mon Boys! 1-2-3!"—as if to show fans that he, too, missed the E Street Band.

And maybe they'll be back next year. But for now, Bruce is just fine on his own. In a pop world filled with one-trick ponies, it's nice to see an old legend who has depth and range.

MOVIN' ON: I couldn't help but notice how different this show was from the *Tom Joad* tour. Bruce was in a very jovial, light-hearted mood, and his style of guitar playing wasn't stationary like back then. He swung his acoustic around quite a bit while playing, plus had the electric guitar for a song and the piano for five songs.

"Two Faces" was a real shocker, I don't think he's played that since the '88 tour. It was really nice, especially to hear it on the piano. You gotta love it when he says, "Lets give this one a try." The encore started with a surprise by bringing out Jimmy LaFave, a singer-songwriter from Oklahoma who lives in Austin now. Their duet on "Oklahoma Hills" was quite good and reminded me of the "Hard Travellin'" benefit in September '96. —*Tom Friedrich*

The Sitter.

RIKU OLKKONEN PHOTO

APRIL 30
GLENDALE ARENA
GLENDALE, AZ

ATTENDANCE: 5,000

SETLIST: Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Youngstown/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/For You*/Book of Dreams*/Part Man, Part Monkey/Maria's Bed/Highway Patrolman/Reno/All I'm Thinkin' About/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//This Hard Land (with Nils Lofgren)/Waitin' on a Sunny Day/My Best Was Never Good Enough/The Promised Land

SOUNDCHECK: "Book of Dreams" and "Two Faces" on piano, and an acoustic "Ramrod."

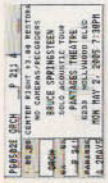
NOTES: Bruce premieres "All I'm Thinkin' About" and performs the rarely played "Book

of Dreams" for the first time since 9/22/92. Nils Lofgren guests on dobro for "This Hard Land."

WAITING FOR THAT SHOUT FROM THE CROWD: Bruce described "Book of Dreams" as a song about wedding days, adding: "That's 'days' plural, unfortunately...." As he introduced "Part Man, Part Monkey" with a riff on evolution, he mentioned the President, and someone in the back yelled, "Fuck the President!" Bruce responded, "That's right." I certainly didn't mind the sentiment, but it surprised me that he acknowledged the yeller—that tends to bring more yellers out of the woodwork. He went on to ponder aloud how the President was able to question evolution while embracing "contributions," "executions," and "retribution." He added, "Fuck you, Elvis, and the dinosaur you rode in on, too."

Nils came out with his enormous guitar for this "This Hard Land" (though he wasn't mic'ed loud enough, which was unfortunate). Thematically, this song fits the show and the album perfectly. Bruce nodded to the crowd, inviting—or expecting—us to sing, "Stay hard, stay hungry, stay alive!" But the audience was so obedient, very few people made a peep. —*Marya Morris*

MAY 2 – 3
PANTAGES THEATRE
LOS ANGELES, CA



ATTENDANCE: 2,700

5/2 SETLIST: Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Youngstown/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Black Cowboys/Silver Palomino/Incident on 57th Street*/If I Should Fall Behind*/Part Man, Part Monkey/Maria's Bed/Cautious Man/All I'm Thinkin' About/Reno/Real World*/My Hometown*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Johnny 99/This Hard Land/Waitin' on a Sunny Day/The Promised Land

5/2 SOUNDCHECK: Includes "My Beautiful Reward" on pump organ, a sign of things to come.

5/2 NOTES: The first of two nights in L.A. (the only two-night stand of this leg), a spirited performance with an extraordinary four tour premieres: "Incident of 57 Street," "If I Should Fall Behind," "Cautious Man" (played only once before, on 5/10/88), and "Johnny 99" on dobro, sung through the bullet mic *a la* "Reason to Believe." Eleven of the 12 songs from *Devils & Dust* are played, missing only the yet-to-be-performed "All the Way Home."

IN THE AUDIENCE: A star-studded crowd, with Sean Penn (to whom Bruce dedicated "Cautious Man,") Jackson Browne (to whom he dedicated "Real World"), Pierce Brosnan, Rhea Perlman, Danny DeVito, Rita Wilson, Chuck Plotkin, Dave Marsh, Jon Landau, Roy Bittan, Gloria Steinem, Rita Wilson, and Meg Ryan.

CHICKEN HIPS: Bruce talked about some of the backlash he received during the last election and joked that his favorite "letter" was a box of broken records and a dead chicken. There was frequent applause, and after about the third round, he stopped everyone and said, "Stop that, I feel like I'm preaching to the already converted."

I have to say that this was an *amazing* show. I would've been fine with all the premieres, banter, etc., but having never seen Bruce perform acoustically yet, I was blown away by the way he continually re-interpreted songs, re-arranged them, and re-thought his approaches. The whole dobro thing and the harmonica mic, the percussion on the guitar during "The Promised Land," the absolutely beautiful renditions of "Incident" and "If I Should Fall Behind"... *Damn!* I had to drive around for a while after the show and let the whole thing sink in. —*Neil Van Harte*

5/3 SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Youngstown/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/The River*/Tougher Than the Rest*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All the Way Home/The Line/Reno/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Johnny 99/If I Should Fall Behind/Waitin' on a Sunny Day (with Nils Lofgren)/The Promised Land

5/3 SOUNDCHECK: Includes "The River," "My Beautiful Reward," and "Ramrod."

5/3 NOTES: While fans spied the pump organ at the 5/2 show, Springsteen plays it for the first time tonight, for the premiere of "My Beautiful Reward"; it will be used nightly from this show forward. Also making their tour debuts: "Empty Sky," "All the Way Home" (the last remaining song to be played from *Devils & Dust*), "The Line," and a piano version of "The River." Nils guests again, this time for "Waitin' on a Sunny Day."

IN THE AUDIENCE: U2's The Edge, Bob Clearmountain, Nils Lofgren, Jim Carrey, Sandra Bullock, Antonio Fargas, Matthew Perry, John Turturro, Steven Spielberg, Rita Wilson, Pat O'Brien, Benicio Del Toro, and Robert Patrick.

IF MY VOICE YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE: Every song from *The Rising* and *Devils* comes across better with just Bruce and guitar than with the additional instrumentation. "The Rising" and "Empty Sky" really came alive. Certainly part of that is due to Bruce's singing, in which I think he is conveying more tone and emotion than ever before. I've never heard Bruce sing better—actually, never nearly as good. His singing live is far better than what was put on *Devils & Dust*. I don't really like "Silver Palomino," but in his live performance I was able to understand the feeling of the song and most of the lyrics better than on the record. How often can you say that? The sound was absolutely perfect throughout the theater. The lighting brings back memories of Marc Brickman's amazing work in 1975. —*Cliff Breining*

ALAN CHITLIK PHOTO

"Waitin'" with Lefty
Los Angeles, CA
May 3, 2005.

ROGER ROCHLIN PHOTO

MAY 5
PARAMOUNT THEATRE
OAKLAND, CA

ATTENDANCE: 3,000

SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Youngstown/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/The River*/Two Faces*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All the Way Home/Nebraska/Reno/Racing in the Street*/The

ALAN CHITLIK PHOTO

Didja hear the one about the 56-year-old guy who got a huge deal from Sony? Denver, CO May 7, 2005.

Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Johnny 99/Land of Hope and Dreams/ My Best Was Never Good Enough/The Promised Land

NOTES: "Nebraska" and "Land of Hope and Dreams" make their tour premieres. Joking about Starbucks' recent decision not to sell *Devils & Dust*, Springsteen remarks that the new album will soon be available at Dunkin' Donuts nationwide. "Racing in the Street" is dedicated to cult filmmaker Monte Hellman, director of *Two-Lane Blacktop*.

IN THE AUDIENCE: Robin Williams, Ernest "Boom" Carter.

PRESS: "SPRINGSTEEN SUITS HIMSELF IN SOLO ACOUSTIC SHOW." Joel Selvin in the *San Francisco Chronicle:* Bruce Springsteen demanded a certain decorum of his audience Thursday at the Paramount Theatre.

It wasn't just that, first thing, he reminded everybody to turn off their cell phones—after a repeated recorded announcement to the same effect preceded him—but he also admonished them not to clap along with the songs.... Taking such a didactic tone with his audience strongly suggested that they were there to please him, not the other way around, and that the evening was about what he wanted to do.

But personal gratification and creative freedom is exactly what's behind solo acoustic Springsteen albums such as *Nebraska, The Ghost of Tom Joad,* and his latest, *Devils & Dust*.... He makes these dark, folky albums to please himself.

He only briefly looked as if he was having fun—strumming an electric guitar and singing "Part Man, Part Monkey," a reggae-flavored comedy he first performed on the 1988 *Tunnel of Love* tour, or rattling off some Muddy Waters bottleneck licks and doing the densely processed vocals to "Johnny 99."

But, loose or not, he had everybody's attention riveted every second he was onstage. And nobody minded being instructed in comportment. They don't call him the Boss for nothing.

A RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE: The Paramount was the perfect place for this transcendent show: small enough, a beautiful old theater with great sound. Bruce with the band is part rock concert, part revival meeting; this was a religious experience in a different way. The mood was dark nearly from the beginning, but his playing and his energy blew the roof off the place. Special highlights were "The River," "Racing in the Street," "Jesus Was an Only Son" (with commentary about his writing between stanzas), and especially a big surprise acoustic "Land of Hope and Dreams," dedicated to Oakland's People's Grocery. It was toned down for the setting but no less powerful than the full-band version he played at Pac Bell Park on the *Rising* tour. The bullet mic was intense, as was Bruce's almost angry guitar work. We were clearly treated to an artist at the top of his game. *—Mike De Rosa*

MAY 7
LECTURE HALL
AT THE CONVENTION CENTER
DENVER, CO

ATTENDANCE: 5,000

SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/ Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Youngstown/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/For You*/Real World*/ Part Man, Part Monkey/Maria's Bed/Cautious Man/Reno/The Promise*/My Hometown*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Johnny 99/This Hard Land/Waitin' on a Sunny Day/My Best Was Never Good Enough/The Promised Land

NOTES: "The Promise" is played for the first time on the tour, and the encores swell to five songs for the first time, making for a generous 26-song set.

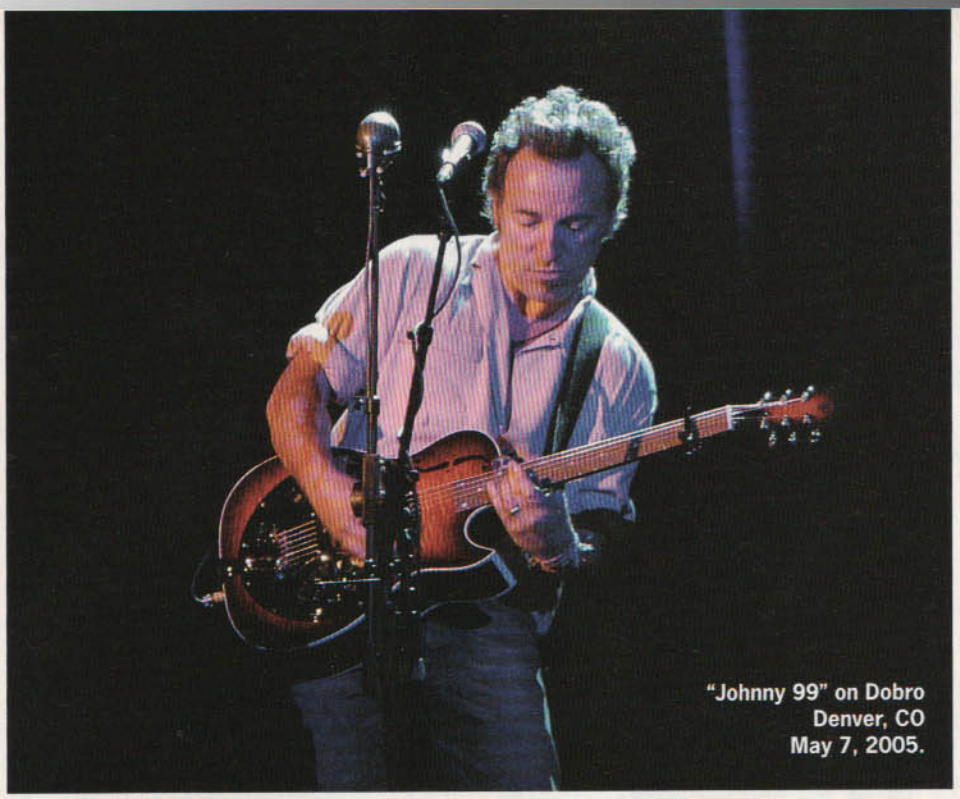
LOVE UNLIMITED: I've seen around 30 shows since 1981, and I have to say this is the best one I've ever had the privilege and luck to attend. "For You" was phenomenal —his intro to the song included a discussion about not being one to write love songs, and talking about his mom listening to Italian singers with their high voices singing sweet, romantic ballads. He commented that some of them still had great voices in their 60s and 70s, and that gave him some hope! He also said that sometimes you look back and see songs can have different meanings over time, and that a song you didn't think was a love song actually turned out to be one.

Bruce was gregarious, relaxed, and intense all at the same time. It was a truly remarkable, intimate performance, during which you almost felt like he was playing for you in your own backyard. I saw him on the *Ghost of Tom Joad* tour and really enjoyed it, but this was on a totally different level. *—Lori Hendrickson*

MAY 10
XCEL ENERGY CENTER
ST. PAUL, MN

ATTENDANCE: 8,000—the largest of the tour so far.

SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/ Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Youngstown/If I Should Fall Behind/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/The River*/Book of Dreams*/Part



"Johnny 99" on Dobro
Denver, CO
May 7, 2005.

ALAN CHITLIK PHOTO

Man, Part Monkey/Maria's Bed/Nebraska/Reno/Paradise***-*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//A Good Man is Hard to Find (Pittsburgh)/Land of Hope and Dreams/My Best Was Never Good Enough/The Promised Land

SOUNDCHECK: A marathon soundcheck reportedly lasts two hours and includes "I'm on Fire," "Mary's Place," "Jackson Cage," and multiple takes of "Paradise."

NOTES: Something special usually has a way of happening when Bruce plays the Twin Cities, and on a tour where almost every night has brought tour premieres, the St. Paul show still manages to leave set watchers gasping, as *Tracks* gem "A Good Man is Hard to Find (Pittsburgh)" is played for the first time ever. "Paradise" is played for the first time since the *Rising* tour and makes use of another new keyboard instrument, an electric piano. The setlisted "For You" is replaced with "The River." Marring the performance somewhat is Springsteen's gruff admonishments towards the more enthusiastic among the crowd. "The whistling? Cut that shit out"; and "You don't have to clap when you recognize what song it is, that makes me feel like I'm playing Vegas."

IN THE AUDIENCE: Kevin McHale, Hall of Fame basketball player and current coach of the Minnesota Timberwolves; and Paul Molitor, Hall of Fame baseball player who once played for the Twins.

PARADISE BY THE LAKES: The crew brought out this small, old electric piano and placed it to the left of the grand. Bruce said: "This little instrument is so special it can't be onstage the whole time." "Paradise" sounded wonderful; at the third verse he shifted over to the full piano and finished the song there, and closed it with some very powerful chords. —*Marya Morris*

A RARER SONG IS HARD TO FIND: An unbelievably touching performance of "A Good Man is Hard to Find" was dedicated to Sgt. Gerald Vick, a police officer who was recently killed in the line of duty. During the "solo spot" Bruce blew a note or two on his harmonica before immediately backing off from the harp—he then *whistled* a solo. A jawdropping, hand-me-a-tissue-moment. —*Kurt Petersen*

MAY 11
ROSEMONT THEATRE
CHICAGO, IL

ATTENDANCE: 4,000-plus

SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/If I Should Fall Behind/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/Incident on 57th Street*/The River*/Part Man, Part Monkey/Maria's Bed/The Line/Reno/Paradise***-*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//I'm on Fire****/Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

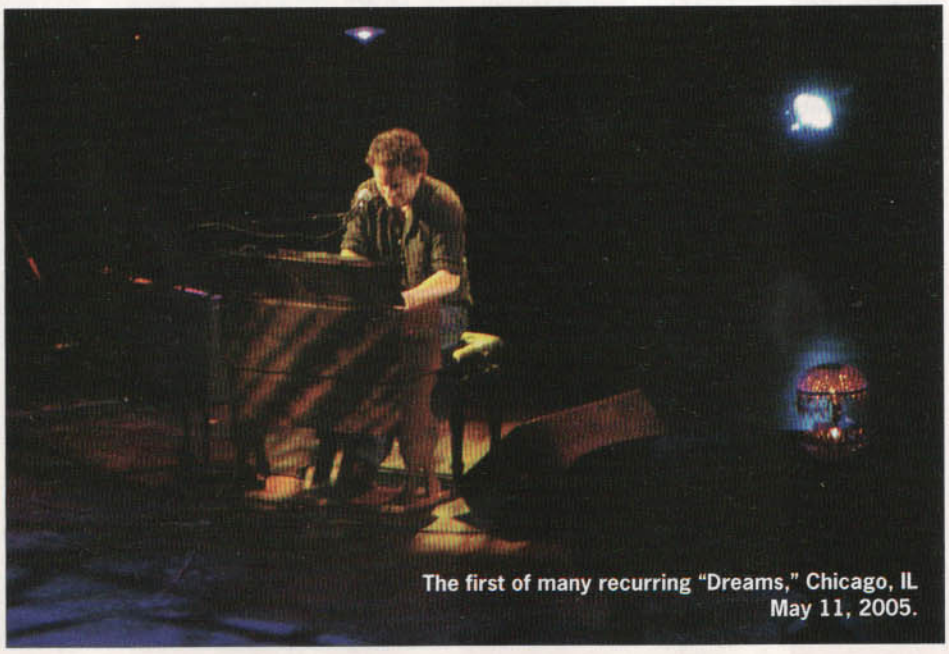
SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Dream Baby Dream"

NOTES: Springsteen introduces the banjitar, a six-string banjo strung like a guitar, for the tour premiere of "I'm on Fire." Played for the first time ever is a cover of Suicide's "Dream Baby Dream." This song will become the standard show closer for the rest of the tour.

ON FIRE!: What an encore! You might think "I'm on Fire" was a gimmicky version because of the banjitar, but this performance cut to the core of the song. It sounded as if the song was originally written on banjo.

A string popped early in "Land of Hope and Dreams." However, what could have turned into a train wreck quickly became a soaring moment. As Bruce handed the busted guitar to Kevin Buell, the audience began clapping loudly to the beat, and everyone rose to their feet to support Bruce, who continued singing a cappella, really digging into the lyrics and visibly working with the crowd's participation. Afterward he commented, "Thank God for happy accidents." There was nothing more to say. This was just a lovely, beautiful moment.

Then came "Dream Baby Dream." The timing the debut of this song couldn't have been better, given the way the encore developed. Springsteen sang the uplifting ballad while playing the pump organ. Toward the end of the song, he moved from behind the organ (which had been placed closer to the stage) and took a microphone to the lip of the stage while continuing to sing as everyone remained standing. Then he exited to his right as he finished singing, the stage cutting to darkness.

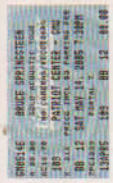


The first of many recurring "Dreams," Chicago, IL
May 11, 2005.

RIKU OLKKONEN PHOTO

Wow. Leave it to Bruce to electrify an acoustic show. —*Dave Miller*

MAY 14
PATRIOT CENTER
FAIRFAX, VA



ATTENDANCE: 7,000

SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/The Ghost of Tom Joad/Long Time Comin'/Black Cowboys/Silver Palomino/The River*/Wreck on the Highway***/Part Man, Part Monkey/Maria's Bed/Dry Lightning/Reno/Paradise***-*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//I'm on Fire****/Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Stolen Car," "Dream Baby Dream," "One Step Up," "Stolen Car," "Wreck on the Highway," "Ain't Got You," "The Ghost of Tom Joad," "Devils & Dust," "Part Man, Part Monkey," "Reason to Believe."

NOTES: "The Ghost of Tom Joad" replaces "Youngstown," and "Dry Lightning" is played instead of the setlisted "Dead Man Walkin'"; both are tour premieres. The real stunner is "Wreck on the Highway," played only twice since the *River* tour, and not since 1994. All help create a more somber show.

PRESS: "THE BOSS ESTABLISHES ORDER—AND THEN CHALLENGES IT." Joe Heim in the *Washington Post:* Turn off those damn cell phones. That was the first item of business for Bruce Springsteen before playing a single note at a sold-out Patriot Center Saturday night. "If I hear one of those idiotic jingles, I'll sweep the audience with my chain saw," he said with a chuckle. "I don't want to decapitate any lobbyists or senators."....

A supporter of John Kerry in last year's presidential election, the Boss didn't back off on the political front. He took President Bush to task for his stance on evolution in a humorous intro to "Part Man, Part Monkey." Later, in his prelude to "Matamoros Banks," a song about the death of a Mexican migrant worker that could be a 21st-century version of Woody Guthrie's "Deportee," Springsteen said, "We don't really need vigilantes along the border. What we need is a humane immigration policy." Lou Dobbs might want to book him as a guest.

MAGIC IN THE NIGHT: He referred to his "magic piano" before starting "Wreck on the Highway." The sound was fat and lush, and his presentation of this soulful, sad song was sublime. —*Douglas Corkhill*

BA DA BING!: "Wreck on the Highway" was a true holy-shit moment—it sounded incredible on the electric piano, even starker than on the album. "Dry Lightning" is probably my favorite song from *The Ghost of Tom Joad* and was a great surprise. It made me want to go to a strip club and put down some gin. —*Zach Everson*

RIKU OLKKONEN PHOTO

BANJO DELIVERY SERVICE

When Springsteen broke out the banjo for "I'm on Fire" in Chicago, sharped-eyed fans quickly figured out—that was no banjo. Bruce was actually playing a banjo/guitar hybrid: a six-stringed instrument with banjo body and a guitar neck, which plays like a guitar but sounds like a banjo. So, what to call it? A guitjo? A banjitar? The latter is actually correct—because the company who makes this particular instrument, Gold Tone of Titusville, FL, has trademarked that name. Gold Tone specializes in unusual instruments—six-string mandolins, banjo basses—and has made banjos for acts as diverse as Bela Fleck, Modest Mouse, and Dropkick Murphys. Earlier this year, they got a call from Springsteen manager Jon Landau with a request for the *Devils & Dust* tour. *Backstreets* spoke with Gold Tone president Wayne Rogers about the deliverance of the banjitar.

So you get a call from Bruce's manager asking for a six-string banjo. Was it as simple as grabbing one off the shelf?

We actually make about six different models, and he asked what I thought would be the best for Bruce. So I sent him two different models. One was the ES-banjitar, which is a solid body electric instrument, with a head built into the solid body—it's kind of shaped like a Telecaster, but it's got a plastic head that sits right in the middle of the body. And then I sent him a GT-750, which is our top-of-the-line six-string banjo, which has a pickup enclosed with it.

When he looked at the ES-Banjitar, he said it was way, way too wild for his taste. He didn't even pick it up—didn't even try it. I think he had something more acoustic in mind—I guess this whole tour he's doing is pretty much acoustic. The electric solid-body I thought would be a real good instrument, stage-wise, but his manager said he didn't even pick it up out of the case. The GT-750 he liked immediately.

How much call is there for six-string banjos? Do you make five-strings as well?

Yeah, we started out as a five-string banjo company. But I'm a guitar player, myself—and probably one out of ten banjos that we sell are six-strings, for guitar players. What this does is, it allows someone to get the banjo sound without relearning the entire instrument. Because the five-string technique is totally different—it's tuned differently, and the unique thing about the banjo is that the top string is a high string. That's what makes it unique, and you have to know an entirely different technique. So the six-string banjitar, for guitar players, you can just play "normally" on it, and it comes out sounding like a banjo. It's tuned like a regular guitar, so Bruce didn't have to relearn anything.

Do you have a sense of what they were looking for—when you were asked to send something that would be good for Bruce, was there a particular sound he wanted?

He wanted a banjo tone, and also he was very interested in amplifying it—with the correct amplifier and the correct pickup. This one has a pickup that was designed for the acoustic banjo that is very accurate-sounding. So they plugged it in, and it was close to what they wanted; they ended up using a pre-amp on it, so they could get a double mix, going into the monitor system and the normal house system.

The manager called back a couple of days later and said Bruce liked it and was planning on using it at that night's show. Then he called the next day and said he needed a backup—that they were going to make this part of the entire tour, and how soon could we get them a backup piece. So they were on their way to Europe, we quickly assembled another GT-750, sent it out the next day.

We did inquire about an endorsement on it—but he made it very, very plain that Bruce does not endorse any musical instruments at all, and that they would be glad to just pay the purchase price on it, just buy it. So we sent it out the next day, and they brought it over to Europe with them. We went to your website with all the songs that he played for each show, and it seemed that he was using it pretty regularly.

I was actually at the first show he used it, in Chicago, and it was fun to see him pull this "banjo" from out of nowhere.

The manager was very excited about it—he told me that that night was going to go down in Bruce Springsteen trivia as the first night he ever played a banjo on stage.

—*Interview by Christopher Phillips*

AND THE NEXT DAY... AND THE NEXT DAY...

The Foundations. By ANDREW E. MASSIMINO

While the Devils & Dust tour may seem like a much-lauded exercise in unpredictability and setlist reshuffling, there are plenty of standout standards that keep the show anchored and steady. Hey internet tappers, it ain't always about the handful of songs that no one saw coming! Let's take a closer look at some of the songs that have given the show its structure. Some earn their slot night after night, some pull up a bit short of their potential, and some could have been played even more often than they were. "Hey, did you see Bruce played 'Real World' last night?" "Again?" Damn straight.

My Beautiful Reward

This one falls in the category of not quite fulfilling its potential. This is an amazing song, but, dare we say it, sounds better on *Lucky Town* than it has opening many shows on this tour. An interesting choice as an opener anyway—it worked so well closing that 1992 album, recognizing the singer's fears and failures while acknowledging that the search for contentment continues. Maybe it was Springsteen's way of suggesting that this show's story was beginning about where *Lucky Town* left off. Regardless, played on the pump organ with harmonica accompaniment, the song loses all its energy and just sits there trying to imitate a Protestant church hymn. The dirge-like presentation had me checking out halfway through.

Reason to Believe ▸

A shake-you-up, wake-you-up, rattle-your-sensibilities performance that served up notice early on: this would be a different experience from those you've had on other Springsteen tours. These lyrics work well as an opener, too—but who could hear them? And did it matter? With a harmonica, a bullet-mic, and 215 stomps on the floor, Springsteen discovered a gotta-shout-to-be-heard blues voice that conjures up a whole mess of darkness and pain. Worth noting: where your seat was located greatly affected your experience of this song. Close up, you could make out the words, enjoy that voice and participate in the song. Far away, it was all grumbles and thumps. There was that distinct "left...left...left, right, left" cadence from the amplified foot stomps and lots of heavy breaths from Springsteen, as he barely had time between harmonica blasts to get the words out. Bruce was working hard on this song-as-performance art, and the howl at the end was chilling. We applaud the effort and the creative risk on this one.

Long Time Comin'

"Here's to second chances." Springsteen seems to enjoy talking about this song as much as he enjoys playing it, typically introducing it with poignant and humorous vignettes from his own experience with fatherhood. It's a serious song of self-discovery and acceptance, but given a more lighthearted delivery and played faster than the live performances on the last acoustic tour. Still, when he sings of his wish for his own children—that their mistakes will be their own—you can almost envision past performances of "Adam Raised a Cain" percolating underneath. Later in the tour, Springsteen began backing away from the microphone towards the end of the song, to allow his un-amplified voice to fill the room, adding great intimacy to an already personal tale. This song was a highlight every night.

ALAN CHITLIK PHOTO

Part Man, Part Monkey

"Evolution." One of the most unexpected songs to enter the standard set becomes one of the most unique sounds of the tour. Springsteen plays this on an electric Gretsch guitar in a version that recalls Dick Dale and the late, great Link Wray. Bruce resurrected this B-side (and *Tunnel of Love* Express Tour staple) for the new acoustic show, using it to weigh in on the very odd, re-emerging battle between Creationists and Evolutionists and how we teach such things in American schools. Eighty years after the Supreme Court settled it once before, Springsteen got to calling his country the "United States of Amnesia" while in Europe. "It's the man and the monkey, and the monkey don't vote." Coming off the Vote for Change tour, this is usually the only time during the evening that Springsteen tweaks the current administration and their catering to the religious far right. "I think the President does what he has to do so he can do what he wants to do. I do that myself sometimes." This is another song that was tremendous every night, and another one whose accompanying intro added so much to the experience. Not to mention the zinger at the end: "We've come a long way...and we're going back."

Reno

Springsteen describes this as "a love song about not being able to handle the real thing." The real thing is (of course) Maria, who appears as a memory in the middle verses. But we don't get to her until we first spend some time with the prostitute in Act One. The visual imagery—even beyond the bawdy—is so compelling it makes "Reno" feel like a movie with three acts. And Springsteen does a fantastic job with his phrasing, seeming to de-emphasize any vulgarities: "Two-fifty up the ass she smiled and said." The song is delivered in a matter-of-fact way, but overall is quite delicate. From reader Kevin Quigley: "I hadn't ever realized how the framing story—the one where the protagonist is visiting the hooker—is all solo guitar, but when he starts remembering better days, the keyboard comes in, making the sound fuller and richer. This was probably the best case of offstage sounds working toward the betterment of Bruce on stage." As for the tale itself, the whole story turns on one line: "Somehow all you ever need's never really quite enough you know." And that's the tragedy, made clear by Springsteen's haunting, mournful moan at the end. The best song on the record becomes one of the nightly highlights of the tour.

Lonesome Day

Along with "The Rising," this song best illustrates how much a song can change from tour to tour, and how much certain songs can improve the more you strip them down. "Lonesome Day" is beautiful and stunning in this arrangement, with its pulsing and assertive guitar strumming balanced by a plaintive harmonica. Amazingly, Springsteen's vocal delivery is very similar to that on the record with one standout exception: backing off the mic, Springsteen consoles and assures us "it's alright it's alright it's alright yeah." No exclamation point there—it's meditative and calming—and the song becomes less about energy exerted and more about getting through a rough patch. Nice highlight—Springsteen plays the extended bridge on his harmonica. You can almost see the E Street band coming to center stage to chime in for the photo-op.

The Rising

Oddly enough, one of the great highlights of the *Devils & Dust* tour has been the title track of the *previous* record. I should admit up front, I was not a huge fan of the song's arrangement on the *Rising* and Vote for Change tours. Those performances certainly had their moments, but there always seemed to be too much grandiosity attached to this most intimate song. Here, Springsteen's gentle picking and peaceful, warm intro practically sneaks us into the song. The use of lighting here is also worth mentioning. A light in front of Springsteen casts a shadow on the backdrop, but it's the light behind him that throws an enormous, guitar-holding figure over the entire audience that induces chills each time I see it. The secret, however, to this song's greatness on this tour is found in its new vocal. An even delivery of the chorus and "li-li-li's" works much better than the bombast of previous tours. It serves the tone of the song more honestly, and focuses our thoughts on what the song truly is—a prayer in response to 9/11.

Real World

A magnificent grand piano performance that paid off 15 years of anticipation. We had high "standard" hopes for this one, and even though it was never performed with the regularity it deserved, it got quite a bit of play. A decade-and-a-half removed from its debut at the Christic Insitute benefit, this song still packs a wallop and carries some immediacy, but it seems to be sung now with a bit more distance and perspective on the events that inspired its writing. "It's a song I wrote in the early '90s that kinda got away from me on the record. Didn't get a good version of it, but it's a good song. This was when I was feelin' the love and showin' the love!" Springsteen told the crowd in Dublin. Ain't it great when someone can reclaim songs from their own recordings? When you take away all the whistles and bells on *Human Touch*, we're left with the true power of the lyrics, the most direct and honest Springsteen had written about love and relationships. Whenever this one gets played, it's like those Christic shows come alive again, right before our ears.

ALAN CHITLIK PHOTO

The Hitter/ Matamoros Banks

What was that about "in order to have a house party, you must get up off your ass"? Well, this ain't no house party. These songs were played back-to-back at almost every stop to close the main set, taking a seat on a stool (as he did on the *Joad* tour) that signified it was time for some serious listening. While the lengthy, sit-down "Border Suite" at the close of the *Joad* set stretched out to four songs, here he cut that in half, cutting down on audience fatigue in the process. Though one repeat attendee was surprised to find "The Hitter" become a highlight of the show: "Watching his face is the key—he's acting every line." In between, Springsteen addresses this country's need for a "humane immigration policy": "Every year there are hundreds of people who die trying to cross our southern borders. They die of dehydration in the desert, and they die in the rivers and in the backs of vans, trying to come to United States to do the dirtiest jobs that we have." For some, "Matamoros Banks" was a culmination of the night's themes: hope, struggle, defeat, and still, somehow, consoloation, all captured in Springsteen's high lonesome wail. For others it signaled: "Time to rush the stage!"

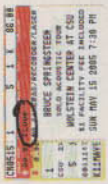
The Promised Land ▲

Early on, this song was used to end the show until "one more for Chicago" turned into one more for everybody. But it never lost its slot once "Dream Baby Dream" was added, and it served as an end-of-the-night roll call to see who the true believers were. It comes less defiant and more weathered than E Street incarnations, but it is still a song that takes stock. Springsteen changed the line "Gonna' be a twister to blow everything down / That ain't got the faith to stand its ground," replacing "faith" with "guts." Perhaps another update from the front lines that belief alone won't cut it as we face our hardest struggles, this slight lyric change helped clarify and bookend "tonight faith just ain't enough" from the new album's title track. The arrangement, with Bruce using his guitar as a percussion instrument, is familiar from the back half of the *Tom Joad* tour; but in typical fashion, Springsteen still makes it of-the-moment. From reader Terence Camp: "'The Promised Land,' which he has turned to so many times in so many contexts over the years to make a point, has evolved in light of the recent election and the country's social ills that he's been addressing for years that remain uncured. Now he presents it as believing a little less in the Promised Land ahead, conveying a little bit of defeat and frustration."

Dream Baby Dream

On May 11 in Chicago, Springsteen had a surprise up his sleeve—one with lasting implications for this tour. Sitting back down at the pump organ after the encores, Bruce unveiled his new show closer called "Dream Baby Dream." Even though it wasn't his song to begin with—"Dream" is originally by the band Suicide—he started making it his own real fast. The song has closed every show since then, and somehow, on some nights can seem like the most personal thing he does. It's almost like living in a Springsteen dream (is it possible he actually looks *younger* on this one?) with its lyrical mantra and droning foundation. But the song intensifies when Bruce comes out from behind that organ, mic in hand and music still swirling, and focuses his mantra directly at the crowd before him. "I just wanna see you smile," he repeats, as many respond in kind. For all its repetition this song can change its tone from night to night. Sometimes defiant, sometimes melancholy, and on some nights it feels like Springsteen is singing this one for himself as a reminder to "keep the fire burning." But at its best "Dream Baby Dream" offers Springsteen the chance to connect very directly to his audience. It removes almost everything but those direct pleas from the singer to the listener, and as he ends the song on the last "Dream baby, dream," there is that look—deep, penetrating, and intense—coming right at you like a dagger in the heart of apathy.

MAY 15
CSU CONVOCATION CENTER
CLEVELAND, OH



ATTENDANCE: 7,000
SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/ Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Youngstown/Lonesome Day/Black Cowboys/Incident on 57th Street*/Stolen Car*/Part Man, Part Monkey/Maria's Bed/ The Line/Reno/Wreck on the Highway***/ Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/ Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//I'm on Fire****/Land of Hope and Dreams/ The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**
SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Paradise," "Ain't Got You," "Stolen Car," "One Step Up," and "Across the Border."

NOTES: "Long Time Comin'" and "Silver Palomino" are dropped from the set for the first time on the tour, and the rare "Stolen Car" is brought out for the first time since the Somerville '03 shows. "Incident" is dedicated to retired Cleveland music critic Jane Scott.

IN THE AUDIENCE: Joe Grushecky is present with his family but does not join Bruce onstage.

SETLIST FROM HEAVEN: This show was exceptional, uplifting, extraordinary. The set list was astonishing in its changes from previous shows. To get rare performances of "Stolen Car" and "Wreck on the Highway" in the same show as "Racing in the Street" and "Incident" was unbelievable, not to mention the terrific whistling banjo version of "I'm on Fire." "Stolen Car" was played directly after "Incident," with no introduction or pause between songs. It was spellbinding to those of us who have waited half a lifetime to hear this beauty played live. —*Karl Birthistle*

MAY 17
TOWER THEATRE
PHILADELPHIA, PA

ATTENDANCE: 3,500
SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/ Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Youngstown/Empty Sky/ Black Cowboys/Iceman*/Incident on 57th Street*/Part Man, Part Monkey/Maria's Bed/Silver Palomino/Reno/Wreck on the Highway***/ Real World*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**
SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Iceman."

NOTES: Returning to the venue where he closed the *Born to Run* tour in 1975, Springsteen delivers the live premiere of *Darkness* outtake "Iceman" and the first-ever acoustic take on the E Street Band showstopper "Ramrod."

ICE, ICE, BABY: Getting the world premiere of "Iceman" was so completely out of left field, I'm wondering who whispered that one in his

ear. The performance was astounding. It's one of those songs I rarely listen to, but it's one that sticks in your head in terms of sound, lyrics, and feel—and he simply nailed it.

"Ramrod," on the other hand, was just an over-the-top exercise in acoustic fun. He started out playing this fun riff on the harmonica and added some guitar—I had no idea what it was until he started singing, "Hey little darlin' with the blue jeans on...." —*Joe Lewin*

MAY 19
CONTINENTAL AIRLINES ARENA
EAST RUTHERFORD, NJ

ATTENDANCE: 5,000
SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/ Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Black Cowboys/The River*/Real World*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All the Way Home/ Nebraska/Reno/The Wish*/Paradise***-*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/I'm on Fire****/Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**
SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Local Hero."

NOTES: All does not go smoothly on Bruce's home turf. A combination of serious sound problems and unfortunate miscommunication creates an ugly atmosphere, marring what should have been a special show. As fans in the affected section continued yelling for the sound to be fixed, Springsteen remained unaware of the technical difficulties and replied, "Hey, shut the fuck up, man. If there's a problem, your money's at the door"; he cracked, "Good to be in Jersey...." A setlisted "Cautious Man" is replaced with "Nebraska."

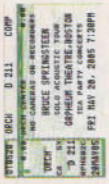
IN THE AUDIENCE: Elvis Costello, Diana Krall, Tim Robbins, Don Mattingly, Jann Wenner, Serge and Dave Bielanko of Marah.

WELCOME TO NEW JERSEY: The show was amazing, despite hecklers at the beginning of the show in the upper tiers claiming (chanting loudly but incoherently) that they couldn't hear—I was surprised the guards didn't get them out sooner, since Bruce was clearly perturbed. A few minutes later they had quieted down, and he made light of it, calling the show "the attack of the relatives." —*Beth Colleary*

TURN IT UP, TURN IT UP!: An entire bank of speakers on the right side of the arena went out during Bruce's third song, and they remained out for two more songs. The audience on the right side, where I was sitting, justifiably got annoyed, and started shouting requests to the effect of "Fix the sound!" Bruce thought this was simply disruptive behavior. "The River" was basically inaudible, and this technical glitch really hindered folks from getting back into the mood after all the disruption. I wonder why someone from the tech crew couldn't have let Bruce know what was going on so at least he could have responded with understanding rather than the sarcastic comment about his relatives. We just wanted to hear you, Bruce. —*Eric Eisenstein*

THE HOMECOMING: Bruce said he would "take a chance," singing the rarely performed "The Wish" about his mother. There was an interesting change of lyrics from those that appear on the *Tracks* CDs; after "I found a girl of my own now, Ma," rather than "I popped the question on your birthday" Bruce sang "time just slips away." I thought the concert was a special one, as we saw the extremes: the human anger, and the human sensitivity and love. —*John Massaro*

MAY 20
ORPHEUM THEATRE
BOSTON, MA



ATTENDANCE: 2,800
SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/ Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Black Cowboys/ The River*/Real World*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All the Way Home/Cautious Man/Reno/Paradise***-*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/I'm on Fire****/Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

NOTES: While there are fewer notable moments for the setlist watchers than might be expected at this conclusion of the first U.S. leg, better than any live rarity is Bruce's promise that he'll return for more after touring Europe. "We'll be back to do this again... I'll be seeing my fans in New Jersey again, too."

IN THE AUDIENCE: Senator John Kerry, to whom Springsteen dedicated "Leah."

BACK IN BOSSTOWN: While I preferred the setlist in Philly, this show was the best. Bruce was more talkative than in Fairfax or Philly, the sound at the Orpheum was better than in Fairfax, and the sophisticated Boston audience (okay, hometown bias) was the best, too—easily the most "in concert" with the performance.

The first highlight of the evening occurred about 45 minutes before Bruce took the stage, when John Kerry took his seat to a standing ovation. His presence added gravity to the evening, especially when Springsteen talked about the devolution of some school boards' stances on evolution, the state of political discourse (where a candidate can catch more flack for windsurfing than for misleading a country into war), and the need for President Bush to adapt a "humane immigration policy." —*Zach Everson*

SHAWN POOLE PHOTO

Orpheum THEATRE
Any altering of this band may result in denial of admission.

LEG 2
Europe, May 24 - June 28

MAY 24
THE POINT
DUBLIN, IRL

ATTENDANCE: 6,500
SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/ Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/ The River*/Real World*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All the Way Home/Nebraska/Reno/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/ Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/ Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/I'm on Fire****/ Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

NOTES: As he did back in 1985, Bruce kicks off his European tour in Dublin; it's a show along the lines of his most recent U.S. performances. The ticket sale set a new sales record in Ireland, with 6,500 tickets selling out in 40 seconds, according to the *Irish Independent*, beating a previous record held by local heroes U2. As will become customary at the European shows, a stage rush takes place towards the end, which Bruce seems to tolerate here good naturedly.

AS LONG AS IT'S NOT TICKING: Bruce's funny side showed itself often, every few songs. Early on he said, "You guys know that I'm half-Italian and half-Irish... that explains the manic depression right there." Recalling an argument with his teenage son, after which his son goes to his room and bangs away loudly on his guitar: "What am I gonna tell him, turn it down?!" At one point someone ran up in front of Bruce and placed something on stage at his feet. Bruce looked at it, then at the guy, and said, "Okay, okay, as long as it's not ticking..." And then his *heh-heh* goofy laugh....

Bruce's well-chosen, certainly pre-studied, and deceptively simple serious comments were powerful and warranted digestion. And the crowd lapped it up. I will not get into the political side of his comments; I choose to note only that he created and fed off the rapport during the performance. This was not a one-way communication or experience. It was shared, folks. —*Matthew Rodinos*

MAY 27-28
ROYAL ALBERT HALL
LONDON, GBR

ATTENDANCE: 4,500
5/27 SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/ Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/The River*/Tougher Than the Rest*/ Part Man, Part Monkey/Maria's Bed/Cautious Man/Nebraska/ Reno/The Wish*/Paradise***-*/The Rising/ Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks// Ramrod/My Best Was Never Good Enough/ The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

5/27 NOTES: The first show of a rare two-night stand includes the rarely played "The Wish." *Tunnel of Love* begins a greater showing, with two songs tonight. On the setlist but not played: "Empty Sky," "Two Faces" (as an alternate for "Tougher"), and "All the Way Home," replaced by "Maria's Bed."

IN THE AUDIENCE: Nick Hornby, Colin Firth, Beth Orton, DJ Johnnie Walker.

5/27 PRESS: Caroline Sullivan in *The Guardian:* ...Spotting an open door on the upper tier, a steward gasped, "Oh my God," and sprinted to close it. "He's very strict, and he'll stop the show," she explained.

So Springsteen has become the sort of aesthete who gets thrown off his stride by an errant chink of light. Age and acoustic tours have a way of doing that to even former spit-and-sawdust types. They also implant the idea that it's acceptable to play for two hours without slipping in a single major hit ("The River" was as hitsy as it got).

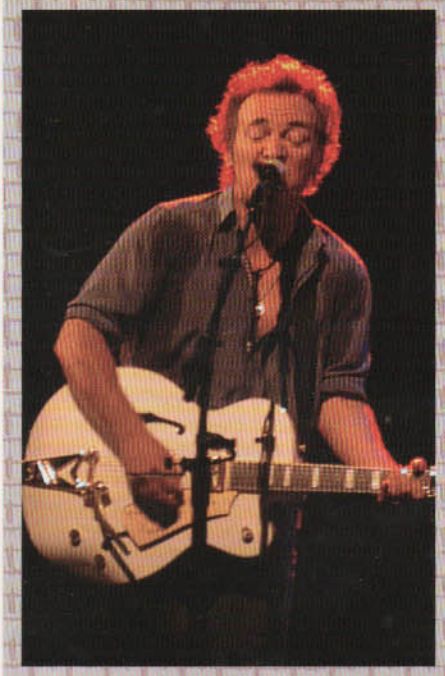
Who'd have thought it—and the worry is, having acquired the gravitas to pull this kind of thing off, he'll probably never fully revert to being the rocking Boss. If that's the case, at least he's negotiating career midlife in a way that will cause the least embarrassment to his kids. There are worse things—ask Mick Jagger—than the role of introspective patriarch, and Springsteen is doing it with grace and maturity.

In a show dominated by the new *Devils & Dust* album, he covered the personal and the political with equal passion, giving a song about the death of his son's friend ("Silver Palomino") the same weight as a rant about American racism toward Mexican immigrants ("Matamoros Banks"). He did it in an accent that has somehow migrated several states southwest of his native New Jersey, which imbued a folksy twang to his anecdotes. Not only is Springsteen a modern version of the politically-engaged Cash/Guthrie agitator, he now speaks like them.

His singing voice has taken on the same weathered patina, and as he solemnly moved through the set, accompanying himself on harmonium and piano, they would have thought he made a creditable elder statesman of Americana.

THIS IS A DARK RIDE: Night one in the fabulous surroundings of the Royal Albert Hall was a great show, with many changes from Dublin. It was a real joy to hear "Tougher Than the Rest" and "Cautious Man," which Bruce introduced as "one of my favorites." With "Nebraska" and "Paradise" in the set, it was a fairly dark and introspective show. The encores were a bit weaker without "I'm on Fire" and "Land of Hope and Dreams," although Bruce's entry into the grasping arms of the audience right and left of the stage during "Ramrod" more than made up for the loss of those two songs.

At one point someone called out, "Where's Clarence?"—to which Bruce laughed, looked a bit bemused and responded, "How the fuck would I know!?" —*Karl Birthisle*



ALAN CHITLIK PHOTO

EVOLUTION WILL NOT BE TELEVISED
Introducing "Part Man, Part Monkey"

Evolution. Well, the board of education in Kansas thinks it's time to throw that one around one more time. The President says the jury's still out on evolution—the whole thing is just too "iffy".

Now personally, I think the president believes in evolution, but he can't say he does, because the monkey vote did not put him in office.

[Applause]

No sycophantic applause either, please. It makes me feel like I'm preaching to the converted. I got a lot of nasty letters during the last election, and I prefer it that way. But you know, we were striking a chord. Particularly, my favorite was the box of smashed records with a dead chicken in it...where'd they find those records?

Now, Karl Rove, I don't know if he believes in evolution, but I'm pretty sure he believes in Satan.

As far as movies—*Inherit the Wind*, the movie that they made about the Scopes Monkey Trial, couldn't get made today. They'd picket that in the theatres. Couldn't make the Flintstones today either—too controversial! They'd have to pass it by the board of evangelicals first, check out the whole Fred and Barney relationship.

[A fan yells out]

The Reverend Jerry Falwell, ladies and gentlemen.

—5/10/05, St. Paul, MN

COURTESY OF BARRY DOBSON

THE QUEEN'S BOX
ROYAL ALBERT HALL

Admit Bearer to Seat no: 13

on: 28 MAY 2005 Performance at: 8-00p.m.

Enter by Door 6

By authority of the Keeper of the Privy Purse

5/28 SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Black Cowboys/The River*/Two Faces*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All the Way Home/The Line/Reno/Real World*/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/My Best Was Never Good Enough/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

5/28 SOUNDCHECK: Includes "My Father's House."

5/28 NOTES: The second show in London is one song shorter, yet sees a more relaxed Bruce, following the familiar pattern of second nights being overall better performances. Seven songs not played the first night.

IN THE AUDIENCE: Sting, Trudi Styler

IDIOT'S DELIGHT: Bruce was much more talkative and communicative on night two. Maybe it was due to the significant "moron factor." One idiot insisted on yelling out during the early songs, and it was very distracting. Sometimes it can be very difficult to judge that fine line between overflowing enthusiasm and moronic stupidity. Later in the show the Italian fans were getting very excited, and Bruce just laughed and requested: "Silencio Italiano!" It worked up until the encores where the exuberance overflowed, and we rushed the stage where Bruce leant right into the side crowds to play "Ramrod," getting kisses from some ladies. —*Karl Birthistle*

SQUIRREL ALERT: The loose between-song stories and introductions were great. One was about a squirrel which jumped up on Bruce's lap while he was sitting on a London park bench. "You guys are overfeeding the wildlife here. I went to the park to get a break, and this squirrel jumped in my lap... like, what's that all about? I thought he was going straight for the nuts!... They might appear to be lovable, cuddly creatures from a distance, but when you get close up, they look fuckin' insane!" He's very relaxed and the feeling is still that anything could happen at this point. —*Mike Saunders*

MAY 30
FOREST NATIONAL
BRUSSELS, BEL

ATTENDANCE: 7,000

SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/The River*/Tougher Than the Rest*/State Trooper/All the Way Home/Nebraska/Reno/Real World*/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/My Best Was Never Good Enough/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

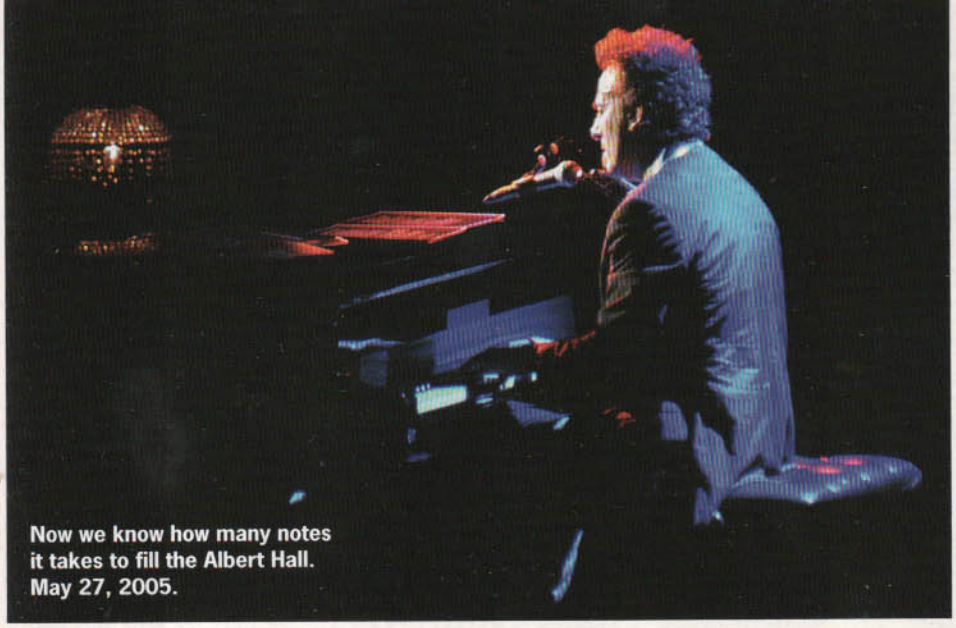
SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Jersey Girl," "This Hard Land," and "Tougher Than the Rest."

NOTES: "Part Man, Part Monkey," which is less topical for audiences in Europe than in the U.S., is dropped for the first time on the tour. Instead of putting away the electric Gretsch guitar, Springsteen uses it to play "State Trooper" for the first time in almost ten years.

THE EVOLUTION OF FATHERHOOD: The new songs made a nice mix with the older songs like "Racing in the Street" and "Nebraska." The funniest part of the night was Bruce describing the three stages of being a father: at stage one you're still God, at stage two you are a benevolent idiot, while at stage three, "where I'm currently at... a fuckin' idiot." Besides that, he seemed less talkative, although he did talk about his father and mother during the introductions of some songs. It's this personal touch that I admire so much. —*Wilco Schepen*

JOSEPH RUBEN PHOTO

A leap of faith in London.
May 28, 2005.



HARRY SCOTT PHOTO

Now we know how many notes it takes to fill the Albert Hall. May 27, 2005.

JUNE 1
PAVELLO OLIMPIC BADALONA
BADALONA, ESP

ATTENDANCE: 8,000
SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/The River*/Real World*/State Trooper/Maria's Bed/Nebraska/Reno/Paradise***-*/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**
SOUNDCHECK: Includes "With Every Wish," "Nothing Man," "Youngstown," "State Trooper," and "The River."
NOTES: Bruce introduces many songs in Catalan, maintaining his practice of trying his hand at local languages as he tours Europe.
MAD STAGE RUSH: Seeing Bruce play at the piano and organ and pull out gems like "Real World," "Racing in the Street," and "Paradise" was a real thrill. Most impressive was his vocal performance—I thought he was sounded better than ever and achieved new heights of emotion with the falsetto endings during "The River" (for me, one of the highlights of this tour) and "Matamoros Banks." Closing with Suicide's "Dream Baby Dream" was particularly stunning and very touching, with the music continuing as he walked off stage in style.

However, some of the hardcore fans seem to lack any respect for the artist. Despite Bruce's repeated requests (in Catalan) not to take photographs, there were surreal moments, with literally hundreds of flashes going on at once mid-song. For me, the show was over after the mad stage rush, and I lost any respect I could have for those "fans" who just want to party and worship their idol. They probably weren't listening to the man when he talked about "Blind faith in our leaders." —*Salvador Trepat*

JUNE 2
PALACIO DE DEPORTES DE LA COMUNIDAD
MADRID, ESP

ATTENDANCE: 8,000
SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/For You*/The River*/State Trooper/Maria's Bed/Highway Patrolman/Reno/Paradise***-*/My Hometown*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**
SOUNDCHECK: Includes "State Trooper," "The River," and "For You."
NOTES: Bruce struggles to temper another highly excitable Mediterranean crowd, noting after the stage rush, "You're not helping me do my job." "Maria's Bed," "Highway Patrolman," and "Reno" form a three-song "Maria Suite."
POLITICS OF THE STAGE RUSH: Firstly, lots of Spanish from the man, and pretty good Spanish as well. And the crowd was very appreciative. Though when he wasn't speaking in Spanish he seemed to lose the crowd a bit. I never thought I'd hear "For You"—it seemed so much sadder just on the piano. "Matamoros Banks" was spoiled by fans who felt they had to prove their fandom by lining up on the steps (right next to my seat), ready for the stage rush, and arguing with the security during the song despite repeated requests from those around to be quiet. So as a result I hardly heard this song, and I had to watch all encores on the screen because the stage rush had blocked my view from my otherwise amazingly good seat. —*Yvonne Kirk*

JUNE 4
PALAMALAGUTI ARENA
BOLOGNA, ITA

ATTENDANCE: 10,000-plus
SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/For You*/The River*/State Trooper/Maria's Bed/My Father's House/Reno/Paradise***-*/Real World*/My Hometown*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/ Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**
SOUNDCHECK: Includes "The River," "State Trooper," and "Countin' on a Miracle" on the piano.
NOTES: "My Father's House" gets its tour premiere and joins "Reason to Believe" and "State Trooper" to make three *Nebraska* songs in the set.

Arena crowd syndrome: This was the same venue that hosted that amazing E Street Band show back in 2002. Unfortunately the venue is just too big for this kind of show. People in the seats opposite the stage are too far from it to even enjoy the concert. Bruce didn't seem much into the performance—perhaps he was tired, or maybe just the venue didn't do the show justice. The sound was spectacular, though. Bruce introduced a song as "One I haven't done in a while" and then pulled out "My Father's House"! When Bruce sang the first line, the guy next to me almost fell off his chair. —*Stefano Speroni*
ITALIAN SON: He introduced the songs and generally spoke in a mix of Italian and English. I have lived in Italy for about a year now, and he knows more Italian than me. I had to actually ask for some translations on the song descriptions. After "The Hitter," he said something that I think was a bit misunderstood because everyone on the floor immediately rushed the staged and appeared to catch him a bit off guard. —*William Benger*

JUNE 6
PALALOTTOMATICA ARENA
ROME, ITA

ATTENDANCE: 8,000
SETLIST: I'm on Fire****/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/Incident on 57th Street*/The River*/State Trooper/All the Way Home/Nebraska/Brilliant Disguise/Reno/Real World*/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Lucky Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**
NOTES: "I'm on Fire" replaces the usual "My Beautiful Reward" to open the show. "Wreck

HIDDEN LOVE SONGS

When I was starting out, I didn't write a lot of love songs. I guess I just didn't want to admit to a lot of love at that time. I had some bad experiences early on—which, I guess, who didn't. But I did have an encouraging atmosphere at home. My mom used to have the radio on—this was in the '50s, when all the songs on the radio were love songs. Everything was about you're losing love, you're finding love, you're chasing love... and it was all sung by men doing their very best to sound like beautifully singing women. Everything was like *[demonstrates falsetto]*— everything was way up high. I'm not sure how that happened, but it was some of the most beautiful popular singing that there's ever been.

Occasionally, PBS has one of those reunions where that guy, T.J. Lubinsky, gets all those old bands together, and they have this doo-wop night where everybody got together, all the doo-wop guys, and they were all still so good! It was amazing to see 60-, 70-year-old men come on stage and open up their mouths and out comes *eternalness*—a lovely, and beautiful, and supplicant sound. A sound of supplication, of surrendering yourself, giving yourself over totally. It was pretty incredible, and we haven't seen the likes of it since. *[Crowd cheers]* Thank you, doo-wop fans.

At any rate, I was sitting in the kitchen, and my mom, she loved all the songs. She was always listening to everyone. She had her favorites: "Oh, that's lovely!"

And my Dad: "Bruce, all love songs are a government conspiracy. That is propaganda. Don't be fooled, don't fool yourself, all those men are paid civil servants." The idea was to get you married and you would have to pay taxes. That was his theory.

So, when I started to write love songs I hid them. I hid them down, down, deep in other songs, so you'd have to dig to find them.

—Introducing "The River," 5/10/05, St. Paul, MN

Here's another one of those hidden love songs. A while back I had two different endings to this song. One ending was two guys, and another ending was a guy and a girl. I won't even get into all that. There were two people I asked about the ending. One was one of my oldest fans, and she said, "You've got to use the one with the girl." I figured she was going for the romance. The other person I asked was Steven Van Zandt. Now, I would have assumed Steve would have said the two guys, due to his great fear of women. *[Laughs]* But he kind of surprised me and said, "No, no, no—the one with the girl. That's what really happens, you know. You got your pals, and then... life changes."

So that's the one I went with.

— Introducing "Racing in the Street," 5/24/05, Dublin, Ireland

on the Highway" is on the setlist but not played. A smaller venue and a more restrained crowd make for the strongest of the Italian shows.

IN THE AUDIENCE: Fellow Vote for Change vets R.E.M., on a break between shows of their own.

SPEECHLESS: Bruce walked on stage with a banjo while the *Once Upon a Time in the West* theme was played from the PA system, like an old cowboy out of one of those Western movies. He dedicated "I'm on Fire" to Ennio Morricone. From then on, an amazing performance took shape, and we all knew from the start that this was one of those nights when Bruce could play anything. Highlights included "Incident" and "All the Way Home" (when Bruce's guitar failed halfway through the song, he didn't seem to mind, and while he switched guitars the audience kept singing). Bruce sang "Brilliant Disguise" with so much passion that it left me stranded; it took me a couple of songs to recover, and just when I thought I was okay, he played "Racing in the Street." I was speechless. *—Stefano Speroni*

LUCKY ITALIAN TOWN: Of the shows I saw, in my opinion was Rome was the best. Bruce was very excited and inspired. "Lucky Town" was very hard rocking, and sounded similar to "Further On (Up the Road)." I think that he chose to play "Lucky Town" because he loves Rome. The night before show, he visited the Colosseum and Fontana di Trevi. The night after, he went on Piazza di Spagna e Trinità dei Monti, taking photos and talking with fans. *—Roberto Meconi*

JUNE 7
MILAN FORUM
MILAN, ITA

ATTENDANCE: 13,000—one of the largest of the tour

SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Black Cowboys/The River*/Tougher Than the Rest*/Open All Night/All I'm Thinkin' About/Brilliant Disguise/Reno/Wreck on the Highway*/Lost in the Flood*/The Rising/Lucky Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

NOTES: The eve of Springsteen's 14th wedding anniversary to Patti Scialfa. Two tour premieres: "Open All Night," on electric guitar, and "Lost in the Flood," previously played at the Asbury rehearsals.

HIGH HOPES: Bruce usually delivers great shows in Milan, and expectations were very high. The setlist was fantastic, but Bruce wasn't focused... he seemed in a hurry to finish the show. "Open all Night," which had not been played for the last two tours, finally came out in the Gretsch guitar slot, replacing "State Trooper." There was no "pulled over by the cops" intro—he just played it, nailed it, and the audience loved it.

"Lost in the Flood" was less powerful than the E Street band version, but it was still a treat to hear, and he played the whole intro and outro on the piano. I think "Wreck on the Highway" would have been better on grand piano. The sound of the electric piano didn't recreate the magic of this song. Don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining—but still, this rendition didn't do the song justice. *—Stefano Speroni*

MAJESTIC: A shorter set than usual, at two hours and ten minutes, with less talking between the songs. Much of the set focused on songs about love and relationships—"Tougher than the Rest" was majestic, and "Brilliant Disguise," which he sang a few steps away from the mic, was stark and stunning. Bruce was cheerful and in a great mood—on "All I'm Thinkin' About" he stepped away from the mic between lines to prevent his laughter from being delivered through the speakers. "Lost in the Flood" alone was worth the price of the ticket. It was quite evident that Bruce's piano playing has improved and has been influenced by Roy Bittan's style. *—Giorgio Malucelli*

JUNE 13
OLYMPIA HALL
MUNICH, GER

ATTENDANCE: 7,000

SETLIST: Into the Fire**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lucky Town/Long Time Comin'/Black Cowboys/The River*/Book of Dreams*/State Trooper/Maria's Bed/Nebraska/Reno/Point Blank***/Real World*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/Bobby Jean/Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Countin' on a Miracle," "Into the Fire" (on both organ and guitar), "State Trooper," "Open All Night," "Ramrod," "I'm on Fire," "Two Faces," and "All That Heaven Will Allow."

NOTES: With two shows after Milan postponed, what was to be the third of five German shows becomes the first, shuffling Hamburg and Berlin to the end of the leg. Three tour

premieres including "Bobby Jean," which was previously played at the Asbury rehearsals. "Nebraska" is played in place of the setlisted "Brilliant Disguise"/"My Father's House." Bruce begins including a snippet of a German polka in "Ramrod," as he will do for the rest of the German shows.

RIGHT BETWEEN THE EYES: "Book of Dreams" was just beautiful and brought the one of the most sustained ovations of the night. Not even "Point Blank" was greeted so rapturously, even though that was the real highlight of the whole evening—incomparably beautiful, a soul-searching and heart-rending version. The passion with which he closed the glorious "Dream Baby Dream" was also astonishing, with his microphone held vertically above his mouth as he looked steeply skywards, totally immersed in the song—wonderful stuff! —*Karl Birthistle*

JUNE 15
FESTHALLE
FRANKFURT, GER

ATTENDANCE: 8,000

SETLIST: Into the Fire**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/For You*/Two Faces*/The River*/Open All Night/All I'm Thinkin' About/The Ghost of Tom Joad/Reno/Countin' on a Miracle***-*/Lost in the Flood*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Into the Fire."

NOTES: "Countin' on a Miracle" is played for the first time on the tour, at the keys. "Lost in the Flood" is played by request, and "The River" is an audible. On the setlist but not played: "Lucky Town."

ICH BIN EIN FRANKFURTER: Bruce remembered playing in Frankfurt am Main (he played here in 1992), because he greeted the audience with *"Ich freue mich wieder in Mainhattan zu sein"* ("I am glad to be back in 'Mainhattan'")—locals refer to Frankfurt as "Mainhattan" because of the city's skyline. He asked for silence and then started "Into the Fire" on the organ, with a little harmonica on the end. —*Jos Westenberg*

I BELIEVE IN MIRACLES: Bruce seemed to be a little distracted at first, partly because of someone disruptive in the audience. He had a few very minor problems with his voice tonight, failing to hit a note here and there, but never so much that it impaired the magic of the song or the evening. In fact, he played the rare and vocally-demanding "All I'm Thinking About" really well, a lot better than on the record.

The biggest surprise was the completely re-arranged "Countin' on a Miracle," a song I had rather neglected on the album, but which turned out to be more than beautiful here. With both electric and grand piano accompaniment, it finally found the proper frame to make it shine like a diamond and bring proper attention to the poetic lyrics. —*Karin Coberlangen*

ALAN CHITLIK PHOTO

"I haven't played this one on the piano. But this is a very special piano: I got this piano on eBay, and, this piano refuses to fuck up! Let me tell you, yes it does. This piano is solid. So, I've got a lot of confidence going into this. We'll see what happens. ***[Begins playing and hits a bad note]*** **Oops! They warned me about that one note! On eBay it said, 'There's a bad one down at the bottom. Look out for that note.' I'll start up a little higher..."**

—Introducing "Point Blank," 6/13/05, Munich, Germany

JUNE 16
PHILIPSHALLE
DÜSSELDORF, GER

ATTENDANCE: 4,500—one of the smallest crowds on the European leg.

SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Highway 29/Incident on 57th Street*/Tougher Than the Rest*/State Trooper/All I'm Thinkin' About/I'm on Fire****/Reno/I Wish I Were Blind***-*/Mary's Place*/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/Bobby Jean/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "I Wish I Were Blind" and "Cross My Heart."

NOTES: From Frankfurt to Düsseldorf, half of the set changes, including three tour premieres: "Highway 29," not played since the *Tom Joad* tour; "I Wish I Were Blind" on the keys; and also a new piano version of "Mary's Place," an audible. "Leah" is dropped from the set for the first time, replaced by "This Hard Land." The handwritten setlist includes "All the Way Home" instead of "All I'm Thinkin' About," "Lucky Town" instead of "Further On," and the unplayed "Sinaloa Cowboys"/"The Line."

CHANGING KEYS: "Highway 29" was beautiful, nice soft strumming and backed up with the string synths again, just like during the *Joad* tour. Back at the Rhodes piano, he said he had a request from somebody out back before playing a beautiful version of "I Wish I Were Blind." Halfway through he switched to the grand piano, and at the end, for the final line "I wish I were blind, when I see you with your man," he was back at the Rhodes piano again. —*Jos Westenberg*

ACOUSTIC HOUSE PARTY: The absolute surprise was "I'm on Fire." The banjo perfectly provided the haunted, driven atmosphere of the song as I would have never imagined, certainly holding a candle to the band version. Too bad it was much too short! The other big surprise was "Mary's Place." It had always been that audience sing-along, and I love it like that, but this sad piano accompaniment actually did the poetic lyrics sufficient justice.

The audience was as quiet and attentive as ever, and Bruce complimented us, saying; "You have been a wonderful audience tonight. I love singing in this format, but it takes two: me coming out, and you giving me this wide-open quiet space out there. It really touches my heart. Thank you very much."

On the other hand, we were also more than ready to clap along as soon as we got the chance—which also received some praise from Bruce. The audience clapped along for the chorus of "All I'm Thinkin' About" but actually managed (as he requested in advance) to stop dead whenever he started to sing falsetto again. It was dead funny, and I had the feeling Bruce was having a hard time not laughing during the song. —*Karin Coberlangen*

THE DEVIL'S WORKSHOP

Over the course of his 37-year recording career, Bruce Springsteen's image has become so wedded to the guitar that it's easy to forget that he remains a multi-instrumentalist of considerable talent. On stage with the E Streeters, Springsteen rarely tries his hand at anything beyond his Esquire, his fleet of trusty Telecasters and the occasional harmonica. Which makes the departure from his traditional musical approach on the current *Devils & Dust* tour especially dramatic; rather than add one or two new sounds to his repertoire, Bruce has been experimenting with a half-dozen new instruments.

RIKU OLKKONEN PHOTO

PIANO

For many delighted fans, the biggest treat on the *Devils & Dust* tour has been the time Bruce spends at the piano each night—an instrument that, since the addition of Roy Bittan to the E Street Band, he's really only flirted with onstage.

Bruce was playing piano long before his mother ever bought him the fabled "Japanese guitar" chronicled in the "The Wish." He flexed his piano chops frequently on stage in the early years, and many of the songs that filled his 1970s albums were penned on the instrument ("Jungleland," "Racing in the Street," etc.). However, his piano playing tapered off while touring for *Born to Run* and stopped completely after 1978. His piano work would remain offstage until the two Christic Institute benefit shows in 1990, when old warhorses (like "Tenth Avenue Freeze-out") and new compositions ("Real World") got the keyboard treatment. Bruce has colored the occasional home-made solo recording with synthesizers ("Streets of Philadelphia"). But the 1998 re-recording of the *Darkness*-era gem "The Promise" had him committing his piano chops to record for the first time in nearly 20 years. The song's surprise appearance in that solo arrangement on the '99-2000 reunion tour was a precursor to the nightly performance of "My City of Ruins" on the *Rising* tour, when Bruce accompanied himself on piano for the song's first half before handing it off to Bittan. By the time of the 2003 Asbury Park holiday shows, Bruce was feeling confident (and loose) enough to provide some boogie-woogie runs on "Christmas Day."

Judging by the Christic shows alone, his abilities were more than adequate a decade ago to showcase on *The Ghost of Tom Joad* tour. Perhaps the generally spare, guitar-based sound of *Joad* made a piano's presence on the road seem out of place. While *Devils & Dust* is hardly a piano-centric work, with only "Jesus Was an Only Son" featuring the instrument prominently, it does reflect a more eclectic approach to instrumentation than *Joad*.

The keys have been a big part of the set on this tour, with Bruce sitting down at the piano bench for up to to eight songs each night, including fan favorites on the grand like "Real World," "Racing in the Street," and "The Promise." .While Bruce is characteristically self-deprecating about his occasional slip-ups while playing, his piano work has become increasingly confident and robust as the tour has soldiered on.

ELECTRIC PIANO

Bruce's stints at the piano bench are hardly the only big story from the current tour. Springsteen has also been trying his hand at a small Rhodes electric piano on songs like "Point Blank" and "Wreck on the Highway." As he tells it onstage, this "magic piano" was an eBay acquisition. The electric piano provides an eerie, less resonant alternative to straight piano, with a sound not unlike the keyboard intro to "The River" played on the Reunion tour; in terms of its sound, Springsteen pointed to the late, great Ray Charles, whose funky keyboard runs on genre-defining classics like "What'd I Say" set the standard for gospel-R&B fusion in the 1950s.

For the intro to "Spirit in the Night" during a June 22 stop in Copenhagen, Bruce told the crowd: "This is the same piano that Ray Charles wrote 'What'd I Say' on. Well, it's not the *same* one, I mean it's *like* the one. *[Plays a short snippet of 'What'd I Say']* Thats the sound! *[Crowd cheers]* I told you! Now, if only these fingers would behave like Ray's... *[Chuckles, starts playing a jazzy intro]* Come on, Ray! *[Crowd cheers]* No, no, I'm cheating—I can't accept any applause for that...."

PUMP ORGAN

The pump organ that Bruce has been using to open and close shows with tunes like "My Beautiful Reward," "Into the Fire," and the out-of-left-field "Dream Baby Dream" is unlike any other instrument on the tour. By pumping floor pedals with his foot (hence the name), Bruce cycles air through the keyboard assembly to create a droning, churchy wall of sound. Bruce's playing on the organ is less nuanced than on the piano—he tends

ALAN CHITLIK PHOTO

By JESSE YOUNG with contributing research by CHRIS FLYNN and JOE KUNECKI

to hold single chords for long stretches, eschewing the dramatic flourishes and arpeggios that color his piano playing.

This rustic, wooden box appears to be a Missionary organ, a small portable instrument that was used around the turn of the century by traveling missionaries to play devotionals. These two-bellow organs often featured gold-plated metal reeds that were better able to withstand the harsh or humid climates missionaries traveled in. Relatively rare these days, Bruce's has probably been retrofitted and repaired to deal with the day-to-day rigors of the road.

"Dream Baby Dream" has also been one of the most prominent instances of off-stage accompaniment on this tour; Bruce's keyboard technician, Alan "Fitz" Fitzgerald provides backstage accompaniment that allows Bruce to get on his feet for the song's climax. More subtle backing also crops up in many of the *Devils & Dust* material as well, with songs like "Matamoros Banks" and "Reno" complemented by gentle layers of off-stage synths behind Bruce's guitar work.

TREMOLO HARMONICA

One of the least obvious instrumental blips on the D&D tour is the new variety of harmonicas that Bruce has been trying out, on songs as diverse as "My Beautiful Reward" and "Cadillac Ranch." With what appears to be a rich-sounding "tremolo" harmonica, Bruce has supplanted his workhorse "diatonic" harps, which use only a single harp reed and have a clearer, bluesier sound. Traditionally, Bruce has played Hohner Marine Band harmonicas, the most widely available, standard 10-hole diatonic harmonica. These larger tremolo harps, however, feature *two* sets of reeds played at once to help create their dense, saturated sound. Over the rolling, ethereal chords of the pump organ, during tunes like "My Beautiful Reward," these new harmonicas create a sound fit for a cathedral.

To create the ragged, bluesy wail on "Reason to Believe" and "Johnny 99," Bruce has also been using a handheld "bullet mic," a classic tool of blues harp soloists (think Little Walter and Paul Butterfield). Most likely the industry-standard Shure model 520DX, this microphone is contoured to fit in one's cupped hands along with a diatonic harmonica. Add that to the near-toxic level of distortion Bruce has been using, and the bullet mic produces a distinctive, Delta blues-style wail.

DAVID EVANS PHOTO

BANJITAR

Is it a banjo? Is it a guitar? Both, actually; it's strung and molded like a six-string guitar but equipped with banjo strings and a banjo's resonant body. In practice, it's no different than playing a guitar, but it adds a wistful, bluesy flavor to the lustful "I'm on Fire." *[See "Banjo Delivery Service," page 85.]*

GRETSCH GUITAR

As the only electric guitars played regularly on the current tour, these twangy rigs have been featured on songs like the re-worked "Part Man, Part Monkey" and the Suicide-style version of "State Trooper". Bruce rotates between two models, an orange Chet Atkins-style 6120 "Nashville" and a white 7593 "White Falcon" used on "State Trooper" and "Ain't Got You." Both feature Filter'Trons double-coil pickups, which produce a thicker sound more suited to distortion.

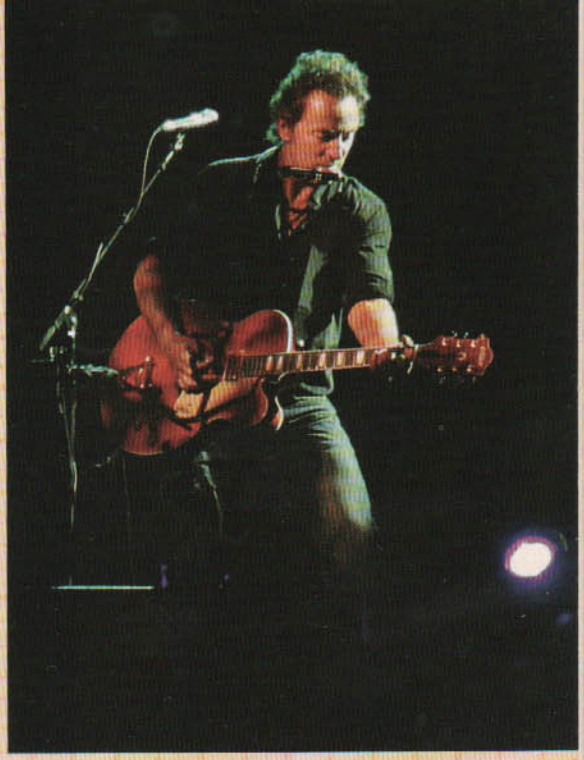
Drenched in reverb and played using a Bigsby tremolo bar (an arm-like metal appendage that extends out from the guitar's body, allowing one to bend notes *a la* Hendrix), the Gretsch gives songs a spooky "surf-noir" feel. The Gretsch is also a hollow-body guitar, allowing the strings to reverberate throughout the guitar's body before being amplified. Tremolo bars (also known as "whammy bars") first made their live appearance on the *Rising* tour, where they were used to create the wild, dissonant solos on the "The Rising" and "Darkness."

ACOUSTIC GUITARS

One of the least obvious but most fundamental musical changes for Bruce this time around lies in the alternate guitar tunings he's utilized. On almost every guitar he plays each night, Bruce has employed a variety of "open" guitar tunings that lend a folky, countrified sensibility to the playing. These open tunings get their name from the fact that they produce a full chord when the strings are strummed without the use of the left hand on the fretboard; in practice, this makes the guitar sound more resonant and full, perfect for the kind of single-instrument accompaniment called for on a solo tour. These tunings account for warm, rippling sound on songs like "Matamoros Banks" making them entirely distinct from Bruce's more plaintive *Nebraska*-style playing.

Open tunings didn't figure much in Bruce's guitar playing until the '90s, although they did crop up occasionally in Miami Steve's guitar work (check out the Stones-y salvo that opens "Crush on You," featuring a vintage Keith Richards-style open tuning). On the rootsy *Lucky Town* album, songs like "Leap of Faith" and "Local Hero" featured bold open guitar lines. And by the time *Joad* rolled around, this tuning style colored all manner of songs—"The Line" and "Across the Border" among them. Long the province of Delta blues guitar players like Robert Johnson, open tunings are well-suited to bottleneck slide-playing; Bruce's slide-guitar bluegrass reading of "Born in the U.S.A." on the Reunion tour was played in an open-tuning on a 12-string guitar, in much the same style as the acoustic "Countin' on a Miracle."

Bruce still rotates between his six- and 12-string model guitars each night, much as he did on the *Joad* tour (that tour's re-worked version of "Adam Raised a Cain" featured a 12-string in an open tuning). While "Adam" has been reprised in a similar arrangement, songs like "Further On (Up the Road)" have gotten radical bluegrass-tinged reworking on the 12-string as well.



RIKU OLKKONEN PHOTO

While Springsteen played Martin acoustics in the early '70s, the lion's share of Bruce's touring acoustic guitars since have been manufactured by Takamine, many of which may have been reworked by longtime Springsteen guitar serviceman Phil Petillo. Bruce employs a variety of acoustic body designs, including smaller "Orchestra Models" (long necks, mid-range tone), wide-body "Jumbo" models (loud, strong lower-end) and standard-size "Dreadnought"-style acoustics (bright, full tone), all fitted with "cutaway" modifications that make a larger area of the guitar neck playable. Deviating from his usual palate of black guitars, Bruce has also brought out two orange-hued Sunburst jumbo cutaway acoustics which he uses on much of the *Devils & Dust* material including the title cut, "Long Time Coming" and "All the Way Home" (the latter on a 12-string). Bruce's "classic" six-string, the black EF341SC, has also been in regular rotation on "The Promised Land" and "Matamoros Banks."

Next issue: *the ukulele and the autoharp!*

JUNE 19
AHOY
ROTTERDAM, NED

ATTENDANCE: 6,500
SETLIST: Adam Raised a Cain/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/My Father's House/For You*/Two Faces*/The River*/State Trooper/All I'm Thinkin' About/I'm on Fire****/Reno/Countin' on a Miracle***-*/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/Bobby Jean/Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

IN THE AUDIENCE: Dave Marsh and Elliott Murphy.

SOUNDCHECK REPORT: We listened to the soundcheck through a closed door, but the sound was very clear. Springsteen played a new (or unknown) piano ballad, including the following lyrics: "Keep you safe, my darling / That's what I do / That's what I do for you / Keep you safe with me / That's my job, you'll see.

He also played the following songs, sometimes only parts, sometimes complete: "Countin' on a Miracle," "I Wish I Were Blind, "Devils & Dust," "Empty Sky," "Silver Palomino," "State Trooper," "Cadillac Ranch" (in a rockabilly-version much like "Ramrod"; he worked long on this), "Lonesome Day," "I'm on Fire," "Reason to Believe," "My Father's House" (both on guitar as well as on pump organ, which was even more beautiful), "Walk Like a Man" (on Rhodes piano, multiple takes with various changes in the vocal), "Adam Raised a Cain" (multiple takes, some variation on the vocal) and "My Beautiful Reward" on pump organ. —*Jos Westenberg*

NOTES: On this Father's Day, Bruce takes a look at the darker side of fatherhood with rarities "My Father's House" and "Adam Raised a Cain," the latter a tour premiere to open the show. On the setlist but not played: "Highway 29."

POP MUSIC: The concert opened quite differently than most shows, with the curtains at the back of the stage being drawn apart and Bruce stepping forward with an acoustic guitar, going straight into a quite unexpected "Adam Raised a Cain." The Father's Day reference was clear. Later he introduced "Long Time Comin'" with the comment, "Two songs for Father's Day." The following "My Father's House" was stark and sad and beautiful all at once.

As he sat down to the piano the second time around, someone yelled out "Broooce!" Bruce just smiled and replied, "I'm here!" Then someone yelled out for "Jungleland," at which Bruce looked up in bemusement and raised his hands up, palms outwards, and responded, "You're dreaming on that one... These are not *those* hands!"

The stage rush occurred just at the end of "The Hitter," as Bruce looked amazed and asked, "How do you all decide when to do that? Does this come from the Italians?!" Then he added, "Be quiet, kids, I've got a story to tell." —*Karl Birthistle*

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION: "State Trooper" was different than the previous versions I saw, sung in a higher voice. "All I'm Thinkin' About" is now really about audience participation, Bruce nodding when the audience can come in, singing and clapping along on the chorus. Also, the house lights are now turned on during the chorus, fading again on the verses. The ending of the song was also different, with Bruce doing a long, high howl. —*Jos Westenberg*

Americans in Paris: Elliott Murphy on "Better Days" June 20, 2005.

PHILIPPE SOSNOWSKI PHOTO

JUNE 20
BERCY
PARIS, FRA

ATTENDANCE: 11,000
SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/The River*/Real World*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All I'm Thinkin' About/I'm on Fire****/Reno/Point Blank***/Mary's Place*/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Cadillac Ranch/Better Days (with Elliott Murphy)/Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "My Beautiful Reward," "Into the Fire," "Point Blank," "Empty Sky," "Paradise," "Cross My Heart," "Better Days," "Part Man, Part Monkey," and "Ramrod"; also, one unkown song, a lengthy piano instrumental.

NOTES: "Cadillac Ranch" makes its tour debut in the encore, in the same style as the acoustic "Ramrod." Elliot Murphy joins Bruce onstage for the tour premiere of "Better Days." The politicized "Part Man, Part Monkey" is back in the set for the first time since London.

ENCORE TREATS: The introduction to "Part Man, Part Monkey" was in French and very short, with nothing about *Inherit the Wind*, the Scopes trial or *The Flintstones*. He just said that in the States, people are trying to make a case against the Darwin theory and asked if there was an answer to this in France. At the end, he said something like *"Ç'est fou"* ("That's crazy").

Opening the encore with "Cadillac Ranch," he threw in "driving alone through the Paris night" and also sang one verse a capella, with only percussion on the body of the guitar. He kneeled in front of the audience and let some people touch his guitar.

He introduced Elliott Murphy as "a very, very good friend of mine, an American in Paris!" They have played together several times before at the Bercy, in 1992 and also in 1999 and 2002. Together they did a very nice version of "Better Days" (Murphy recorded this song for the *Light of Day* tribute CD). Elliott sang the first verse and Bruce the second, with great harmonies on the chorus; Bruce also played harmonica, and both played guitar. —*Jos Westenberg*

JUNE 22
FORUM
COPENHAGEN, DEN

ATTENDANCE: 6,500
SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/Incident on 57th Street*/Tougher Than the Rest*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All I'm Thinkin' About/Straight Time/I'm on Fire****/Reno/I Wish I Were Blind***-*/Spirit in the Night***-*/The Rising/

RIKU OLKKONEN PHOTO

Bruce reflects at the grand June 20, 2005.

Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Cadillac Ranch/Wild Billy's Circus Story/Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUDCHECK: Includes "Spirit in the Night," "Wild Billy's Circus Story," "Into the Fire," "Straight Time," "Cadillac Ranch," "I'm on Fire," and "Worlds Apart."

NOTES: Three tour premieres for the lucky Danes: "Spirit in the Night" on the keys, the first "Straight Time" since the *Joad* tour, and a slow rendition of the super-rare "Wild Billy's Circus Story" shaking up the encore.

THE EARLY YEARS, BY REQUEST: "Spirit in the Night" was introduced as a request, and with the words, "first and last time I play this on the tour." The audience sang along to the "All night" lines as mellow and soft as possible, putting a smile on Bruce's face. "Wild Billy's Circus Story" was also apparently a request for a guy in the audience on his birthday, Springsteen saying, "You weren't even around when I wrote this!" *—Lars Oddvar*

CIRCUS STORIES: Bruce was very chatty, telling the audience that the electric piano has the same sound as Ray Charles' on "What'd I Say." To prove it he played a snippet of the intro of the song! "All I'm Thinkin' About" was sung far softer than the version on the album; "Straight Time" was a little faster than it was on the *Tom Joad* tour. The first-ever appearance of "Wild Billy's Circus Story" in Europe sounded similar to the version he played at Harry's Roadhouse in December 2004, with additional harmonica. There was also a nice audience sing-along at the end of "Land of Hope and Dreams." An impressed crowd left the Forum into the full moon Copenhagen night. *—Oliver Kranke*

JUNE 23
SCANDINAVIUM
GOTHENBURG, SWE

ATTENDANCE: 7,000

SETLIST: Into the Fire**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Highway 29/Incident on 57th Street*/Real World*/State Trooper/All I'm Thinkin' About/Highway Patrolman/Reno/Fade Away***-*/Racing in the Street***-*/The Rising/Lucky Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Cadillac Ranch/Bobby Jean/Maria's Bed/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Fade Away" and "Janey Don't You Lose Heart."

NOTES: Bruce plays "Fade Away," by request, for the first time since the *River* tour. "Incident on 57th Street" is dedicated to young fan Daniel Hedvall, who had passed away the previous year due to a heart condition. "Maria's Bed" makes a surprise appearance in the encore.

PARTY LIKE IT'S 1981: As "old fans" may remember, Scandinavium in Gothenburg was where Bruce played back in '81. But history aside, this was simply among the three best Bruce shows (if not *the* best, musically speaking) I have ever seen. After entering the arena to ecstatic cheers, Bruce kicked things off with "Into the Fire." Although not one of my favorite songs (remember how this sometimes killed the pace of the *Rising* shows), the pump organ version was far superior to the album version—clearly the best style for this song.

Don't we all love that feeling when Bruce says, "This is something I haven't done in a *long* time...." "Fade Away" hadn't been played since '81, and Bruce played the whole song just grinning. He looked like he thought of the song as a long-lost friend from another time, when he was so much younger—and he almost seemed embarrassed by some of the lyrics. Other highlights included "Racing in the Street" and "Lucky Town." "Maria's Bed" was a *perfect* encore song. I can't believe that this is the only time so far he has played it in this slot. *—Ivar Noer*

JUNE 25
HOVET
STOCKHOLM, SWE

ATTENDANCE: 6,500

SETLIST: Downbound Train**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Black Cowboys/The Promise*/The River*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All I'm Thinkin' About/Across the Border/Reno/Point Blank***/Walk Like a Man***-*/My Hometown*/The Rising/Lucky Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/Bobby Jean/Blinded By the Light/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Downbound Train," "Point Blank," "Walk Like a Man," "Empty Sky," "Across the Border," and "Cadillac Ranch."

NOTES: The originally scheduled European tour finale gets four tour debuts, including the first "Walk Like a Man" since the *Tunnel* tour.In the encore, the Swedish crowd breaks into the native drinking song "Helan Går" to celebrate the Swedish Midsummer festival.

MIDSUMMER BOSS: Standing outside Hovet before the doors opened, hearing Bruce soundchecking "Downbound Train," we started to feel that this show could be something out of the ordinary. Springsteen delivered, of course. The setlist was amazing on its own, with those four tour premieres all highlights. Yet it was the audience that made the show something far greater than some songs on paper.

Prior to "Blinded by the Light," Springsteen gave the audience his take on the Swedish Midsummer tradition, which sparked a spontaneous sing-along of a traditional drinking song called "Helan Går" ("Helan Walks"). A real Kodak moment, as Springsteen was beaming with joy and that old party-energy that has made his shows so mythical. The reward the audience got in return was one incredible version of "Blinded." He even managed a "funky break" on the guitar, on cue. I still get a childish grin on my face just thinking about it. *—Tobias Sonestedt*

JUNE 27
COLOR LINE ARENA
HAMBURG, GER

ATTENDANCE: 9,000

SETLIST: Downbound Train**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Highway 29/Tougher Than the Rest*/The River*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All I'm Thinkin' About/Highway Patrolman/Reno/Janey Don't You

Lose Heart***-*/Racing in the Street***-*/The Rising/Spare Parts/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/Bobby Jean/Growin' Up/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

NOTES: The penultimate night of the European tour is the first of the two rescheduled German concerts; Bruce apologizes for the inconvenience, and pulls out three more tour premieres."State Trooper" is played in place of the setlisted "Part Man, Part Monkey."

ARE YA LOOSE?!: The biggest surprise certainly was "Janey Don't You Lose Heart," a song that I never much acknowledged due to its pop sound, but now, on piano, it found its true form that finally allowed the lyrics to shine. Another surprise was the tour debut of "Spare Parts"—in my opinion a performance still in the experimental stage, missing completely the drive the band version has. Bruce seemed to be more loose and upbeat in general than at the previous shows. "Too much German beer!" as Bruce confessed when he danced goofily to "Ramrod"? In any case, another fantastic night with loads of surprises and Bruce in top-form. —*Karin Coberlangen*

JUNE 28
ICC
BERLIN, GER

ATTENDANCE: 5,000

SETLIST: Adam Raised a Cain****/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/For You*/Two Faces*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All the Way Home/Sinaloa Cowboys/Reno/Paradise***-*/Real World*/The Rising/Spare Parts/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/Hungry Heart/Bobby Jean/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Book of Dreams," "My Beautiful Reward," "Reason to Believe," and "The River."

NOTES: A somewhat rowdier than usual crowd, but by most accounts a strong end to the European tour. This rescheduled Berlin show includes nine songs not played the night before, and two tour premieres including frequent German guest Wolfgang Niedecken on "Hungry Heart." "Ramrod" is an audible.

ADAM REVISITED: The venue in Berlin was a pure delight, smaller than most others on this tour, clean and neat, with chairs at the front right up against the stage leading to a very intimate feel. Bruce entered from the center stage rear, gently strumming the banjo, but not whistling. He totally surprised me with a radically reworked "Adam Raised a Cain," much more arresting than the guitar version in Rotterdam. This was spare and haunting, evocative and cruel—John Steinbeck would have been proud! —*Karl Birthistle*

RESTLESS NIGHT: "Sinaloa Cowboys" was played with the big [tremolo] harmonica, the one he also uses on "Ramrod," with a much richer sound. It was a very nice version, despite some shouts from the audience during the performance. The crowd became louder and louder, and Bruce didn't say much to prevent the growing distraction. It seemed to me that he lost his connection to the crowd here, and it took him until the encore to get it back. But "Spare Parts" was intense, much better than in Hamburg.

In the encore, for "Hungry Heart," Bruce called his good friend Wolfgang Niedecken onstage, who sang the second verse in a German dialect from Cologne. (Quite a few rude people in the audience booed Niedecken.)

After that, a fan pushed his very young daughter onstage with flowers for Bruce, and the little girl was rewarded with a harmonica. There was even a younger baby—not much older than one year, I'd guess—sitting on someone's shoulders in the eighth row or so; Bruce saw him when he was shaking hands at the end of the show and said, "That must be my youngest fan!" —*Jos Westenberg*

JUNE 29
KEFLAVIK INTL. AIRPORT
KEFLAVIK, ICELAND

ATTENDANCE: Around 30

SETLIST: Somewhat unclear. Early reports mentioned "The River" being played in a six song mini-show, but later reports suggested the following setlist: Dancing in the Dark/Bobby Jean/This Hard Land/Working on the Highway/Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street?/I'm on Fire

NOTES: On his way back from Germany to the U.S., late on the night of the 28th after the Berlin show, Springsteen's plane stops over in Iceland. Having never set foot in the country, he decides to disembark, and winds up treating some late-shift workers (and a slowly gathering crowd) to a 20-minute set.

PRESS: The *Iceland Review*: "The employees commented that Springsteen showed no pretense and was very down-to-earth, chatting away with them. His friend asked the airport employees if they would like to listen to a few tunes.... After the impromptu concert he asked what typical Icelandic food consisted of—the fans were quick to answer 'Black Death and Shark.'"

PETER AXELSEN PHOTO

Wolfgang Niedecken guests in Berlin June 28, 2005.

LEG 3
North America, July 13 - August 13

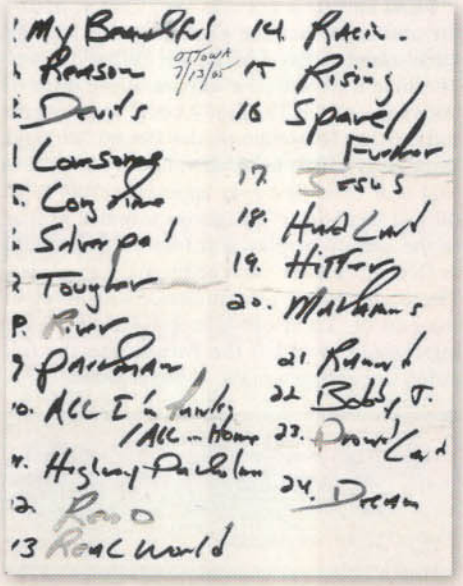
JULY 13
COREL CENTRE
OTTAWA, ON

SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/Tougher Than the Rest*/The River*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All the Way Home/Highway Patrolman/Reno/I Wish I Were Blind***-*/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Spare Parts/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/Bobby Jean/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "This Hard Land."

NOTES: In the midst of a thunderstorm Bruce brings the tour back to North America and to Canada for the first time. "I Wish I Were Blind" and "Spare Parts" get their first continental airing of the tour. The storm isn't bad enough to postpone the show, but the weather gods make their mischief nonetheless...

LIGHTS OUT TONIGHT: Just as the final chord to "Reno" was struck, we heard a *huge* pop, and all the lights in the arena went out. We all sat there in the black, wondering if this was part of the show. Amid flickering and failing lights Bruce spoke out loud, trying to figure out what had happened while entertaining the crowd: "I'd say we're in the middle of some massive fuck-up! I'm not sure what kind." "I can't see a goddamn thing. I need some light! I'm good, but I'm not *that* good." Of course, the crowd was laughing along with him and just eating this up. As the lighting returned, Bruce said with a chuckle, "This song now seems apropos." And with that he went into "I Wish I Were Blind." Afterwards he told us: "Let me tell you, when something like that happens on stage, everyone gets scared. Now *anything* can happen! Well, folks, it's live, and that's what you pay your money for." —*Andre Gagne*



JULY 14
AIR CANADA CENTRE
TORONTO, ON

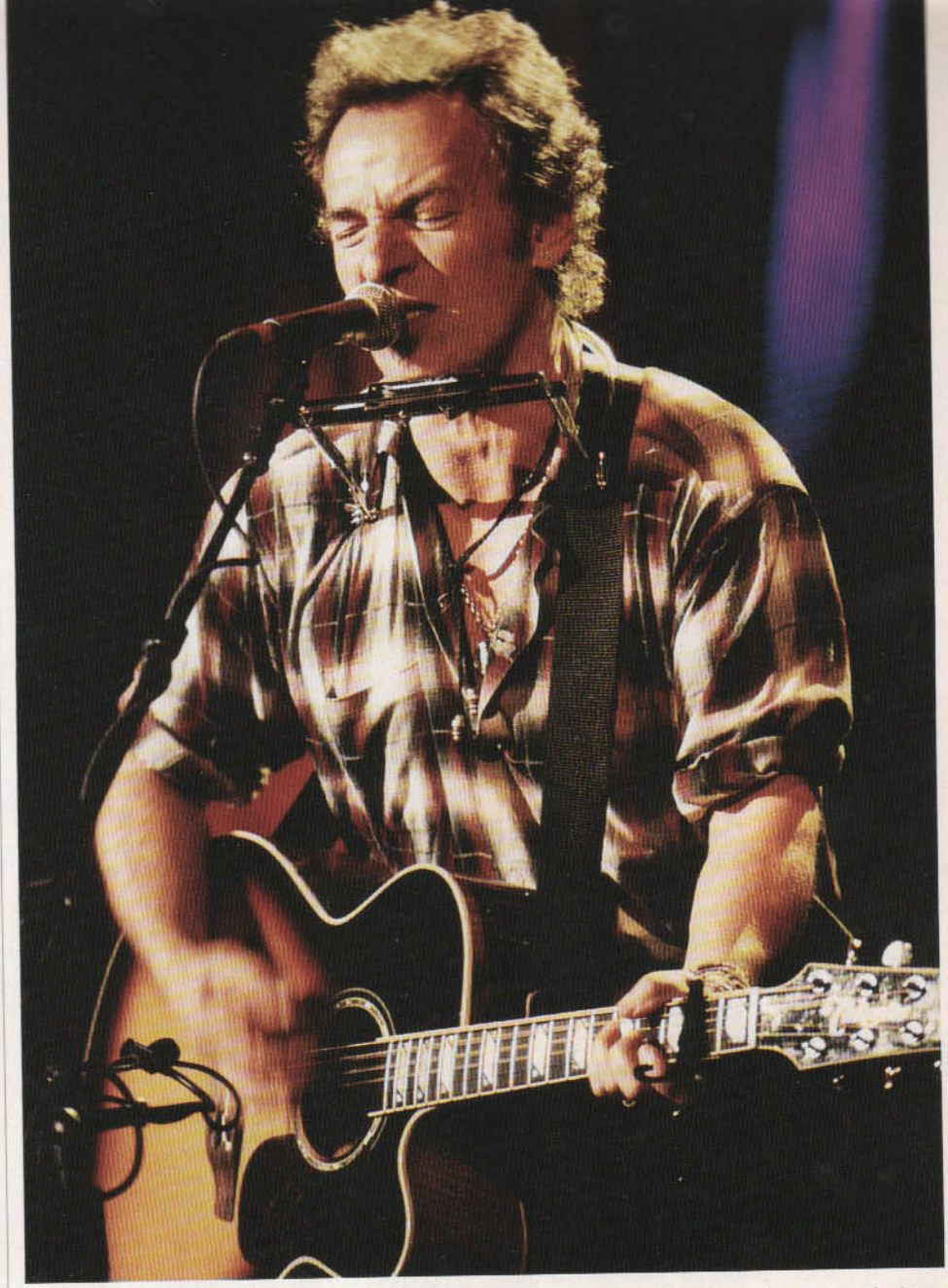
ATTENDANCE: 8,000

SETLIST: Into the Fire**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Highway 29/For You*/Two Faces*/State Trooper/All I'm Thinkin' About/Brilliant Disguise/Reno/Wreck on the Highway***/Lost in the Flood*/The Rising/Further on (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Darlington County/Bobby Jean/Wild Billy's Circus Story/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

NOTES: More than half the set changes from the previous night in Ontario. Tour premiere "Darlington County" kicks off the encore with some audience participation, and the more introspective *Tunnel* era is well represented by both "Two Faces" and "Brilliant Disguise" played by request. Bruce even flashes back to the *Tunnel* tour, singing part of "I'm a Coward" during his love-song talk before "For You," a sign of things to come on this second North American leg.

INCREDIBLE: The opening four songs were as powerful as any I've seen, especially "Into the Fire" on the pump organ, right into the dark harp blues of "Reason to Believe." And to get "For You," "Lost in the Flood," and a jaw-dropping version of "Wreck on the Highway" on electric piano, you know this was a special night in the big smoke. What else could one ask for? How about a "Darlington County" singalong, great stories all night, and "Wild Billy" for a fan at the front. The new songs were brilliant live. My favorite song of the night, hands down was "Matamoros Banks." —*Warren Prest*

MEET THE NEW BOSS: The Boss that performed in Toronto was much more relaxed and confident than he had been in Cleveland; he seemed much more at home and comfortable with being alone on stage in a large venue. "Darlington County" started the encores and really was a perfect choice for the show. It seemed like the entire crowd instantly stood up and started clapping and singing along, which Bruce encouraged. This was the same kind of connection between performer and audience as when the house lights turn up and the E Street Band plays "Born to Run." I can't think of another performer out there today who is capable of that kind of connection with an audience in an arena accompanied only by an acoustic guitar and a harmonica. —*Jay Algar*



RENÉ VAN DIEMEN PHOTO

JULY 16
PEPSI ARENA
ALBANY, NY

ATTENDANCE: 10,000

SETLIST: Into the Fire**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/The Promise*/Tougher Than the Rest*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All the Way Home/Cautious Man/Reno/Paradise***-*/Real World*/The Rising/Spare Parts/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/This Hard Land/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street?/Bobby Jean/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Dancing in the Dark" and "Spirit in the Night."

NOTES: Springsteen's first show back in the U.S. since May features the tour premiere of "Bus Stop," a generous three song helping from *Tunnel*, and other rarities like "The Promise" and "Paradise," both played by request.

IN THE AUDIENCE: Bruce's son Evan, to whom "Long Time Comin'" is dedicated (with a bit of "Pony Boy" for good measure); Evan's friend Tyler, for whom "Silver Palomino" was written and dedicated tonight; NBA coach Pat Riley.

FATHERS AND SONS: The intro to "Long Time Comin'" was laced with humor as Bruce sang a snippet of the song "Pony Boy," cutting it off and noting that "Evan hates that fucking song." "Silver Palomino" seemed to have been stripped of at least one of its punctuating guitar runs on this night, and like all of the new songs so potently revealed the first time out, it didn't strike me as revelatory—so it goes with seeing multiple shows and Bruce's innate and immediate ability to reveal the depth of his songs in performance. —*Bill Kenney*

PIANO MAN: The Albany show was better than Fairfax, almost as good as Philly, and more than made up for my issues with the NJ crowd from the Meadowlands show in May. The crowd was completely respectful of Bruce and his music, and Bruce was a little looser and very good-natured; less storytelling, but more songs.

"This Hard Land" was done very well, as Bruce stepped back and made his voice a bit remote from the mic.. "Paradise" and "Real World" were hauntingly beautiful. Bruce on electric piano is the highlight of the show for me—that beautiful, elegant sound fits his voice perfectly. —*Jack Grosso*

CATHOLICIZED!

Introducing "Jesus Was an Only Son"

I am a product of the Catholic school system, which means, of course, that Jesus is my homeboy. That's about the size of it. That's just the way it is.

They picked the Pope recently, and it was such a big deal. It's kind of like watching a lot of the high-end trading for a team you don't play for anymore—but you're still kind of interested in where they are in the standings.

The whole Catholic school thing is—I used to think once you're gone, you're gone. But like Al Pacino said, once you're in, you're in. There's no getting out! They just keep pulling you back in. So I gave up trying to get out. I went back to my old school and I played a show.

I go to the convent now, and the nuns ply me with beer—which they didn't have when I was a kid. Now they have beer there, and they'll give it to you if you go on in and ask them. Give it a try! I don't know if it's the same here, but that's how it is in Jersey. They've got the ballgame on, and it's a sanctuary now *[laughs]*. I used to go to strip clubs, now I just stop in at the convent. My mind rests an hour or two.

Anyway, I wrote this song. I was interested in the relationship between Jesus and Mary. I tried to imagine the story from Mary's perspective, because for her, she was just losing her boy. I guess it's kind of a song about what makes our choices mean something. It's the stuff that we sacrifice—the things that we give up to gain something else. That's what makes our choices have meaning, the things that we sacrifice.

So, this is kind of a song about that. It's also a song about a mother's place, and a son trying to console his mother about the choices he's made.

—5/10/05, St. Paul, MN

I was brought up Catholic, and we lived on this little L-shaped block. I lived here with my grandma and grandpop and my parents; then there was a little field; then there was the nun's convent and the priest's rectory; and then there was the Catholic church right on the corner. And across the street from the Catholic church was my aunt's house with a couple of young cousins in it; next to her was my uncle's house with three cousins in it—they were kind of older cousins. And then two houses down was my great grandmother's house. And that was just the Irish!

Across the street was my grandmother's house, with my mother's sister and my uncle and two more cousins in it. And that was the Italian outpost. It was funny: all the time I grew up – it was just a little camp we had going – but the Italians never crossed the street to the Irish, and the Irish never crossed the street to my grandmother's house. And the funny thing was, we never thought a damn thing about it. It was a funny sort of set-up.

But I saw about every wedding and every funeral for about a decade in that little church. I'd seen more guys carried away in black Cadillacs by the time I was ten than anybody else. I had a big bag of rice in my closet, because when the weddings would come, we'd pick up all the rice after they threw the rice. I'm not sure why. And then we'd save it and run down at the next wedding and throw it—and then pick it up again. But all in all, it was a combination of a blissful and torturous upbringing—which, of course, whose wasn't, I suppose.

I thought I got away from the whole Catholic thing when I left the church by about the eighth grade. That is when I called it quits—that was about as far as I could take it. But it was an interesting childhood, because it was filled with terror and in mystery and poetry and power that was way beyond my understanding, but that you absorbed anyway. You absorbed it all. You know, the church with all its shadows and its brightness and the combination of ceremony—the constant ceremony we witnessed because we lived so close. It was an unusual upbringing.

I look back into my songs, which are filled with so much religious imagery, and I guess, you know, that was the big deal.

But I wrote this song—on *Devils & Dust*, I wrote a lot about parents and children. And so of course, I thought back. What would it be like if Jesus was—everybody is somebody's baby. I was thinking of Jesus as someone's son, and Mary as a mother. A funny thing happens, I think, when we turn things into icons, we sort of blow them up and diminish them at the same time. And we forget the human side—that there was an actual life there all the time.

So I am going to sing this one, this is called "Jesus Was an Only Son," and send this one out to the moms and pops.

[mid-song 1] The most immediate instinct when you have those kids, of course, is to protect them and keep them from suffering. It's kind of a life sentence. There's not much you can do about it, anyhow, I guess.

[mid-song 2] I always figure that the choices we make are given their weight and their meaning by the things that we sacrifice for them—you choose a part of life, and you give up something. So I always figure that Jesus had to be thinking about the things he was going to lose: how beautiful it was in Galilee this time of year... that there's a little bar down by the water, probably looking for a manager, and that Mary Magdalene, she could tend bar. We could have a bunch of kids... get to see the sun fall on their faces, and get to see the air fill their lungs at night when they are sleeping. And get to see the next day, and the next day, and the next day, and the next day, and the next day, and the next day.

—8/10/05, Portland, OR

JULY 18
HSBC ARENA
BUFFALO, NY

ATTENDANCE: 6,500

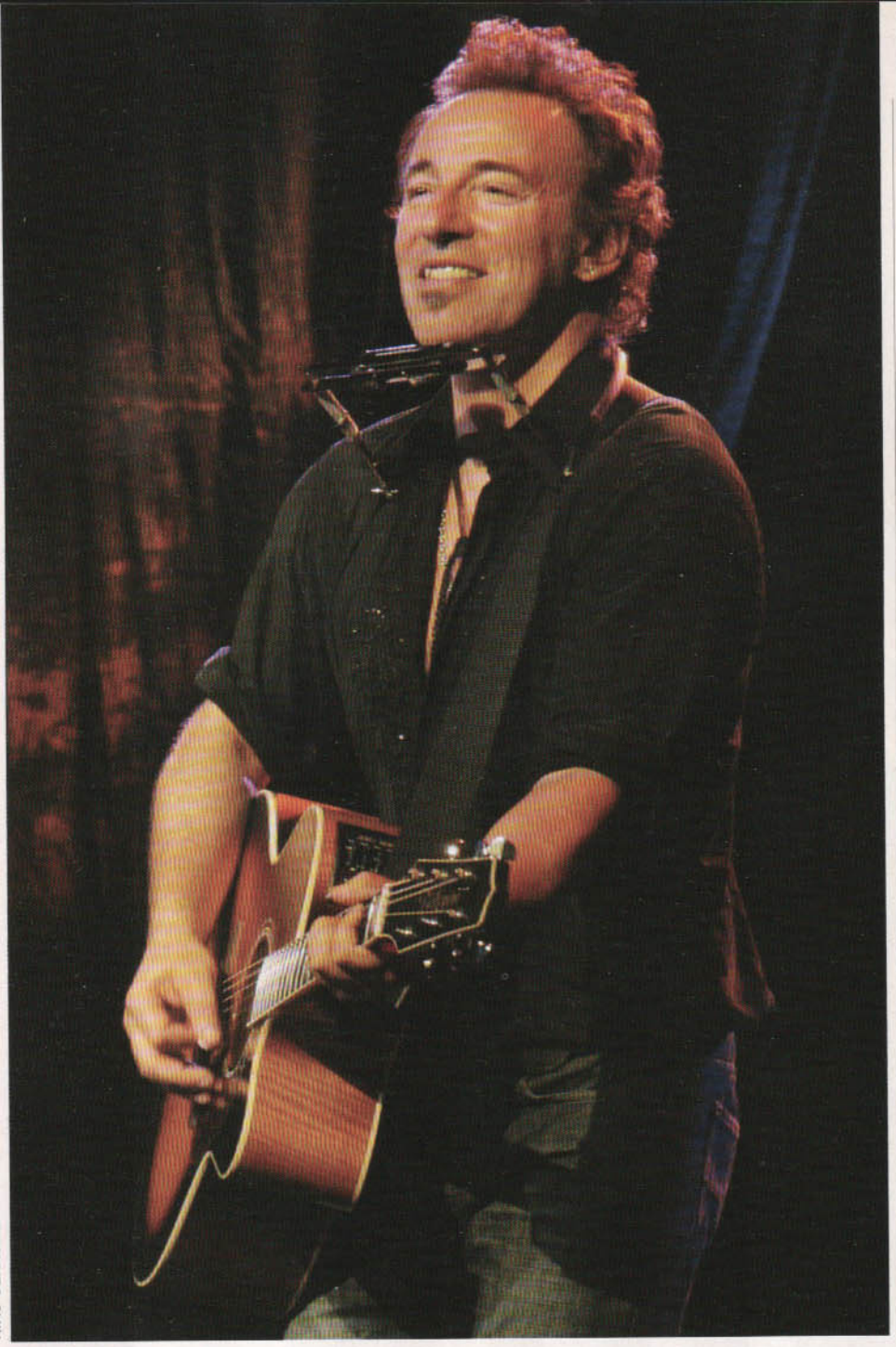
SETLIST: Prove It All Night/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Black Cowboys/4th of July, Asbury Park (Sandy)***/Leap of Faith*/State Trooper/Nebraska/Maria's Bed/The Line/Reno/When You're Alone***/You're Missing*/The Rising/Darkness on the Edge of Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/If I Should Fall Behind/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street?/My Best Was Never Good Enough/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Darkness on the Edge of Town" on both pump organ and guitar, and "Sad Eyes."

NOTES: Unlike many previous *Devils & Dust* shows, Buffalo does not come close to selling out. But those in attendance are treated to a setlist which truly stands out on a tour chock full of amazing ones. Opening with a last-minute audible of the tour's first "Prove it All Night" (rather than the setlisted "My Beautiful Reward"), the show includes five additional tour premieres. The first U.S. tour performance of "State Trooper" in its second arrangement of the tour, with Bruce's voice in its upper register like the end of the European leg, rather than the earlier "surf-noir" version. "Nebraska" is an audible. On the setlist but not played: "Lucky Town."

NUDGE NUDGE: The "Prove It All Night" opener was just jaw-dropping. Having followed the setlists online, I counted the six premieres with glee and nudged my wife every other song, telling her, "He hasn't played this the whole tour!" It is those kinds of special moments that never fade, and make each of the 18 times I've seen him special and memorable in their own distinct way. What other major star has built up enough bankable cache to be able to pull off two acoustic tours to critical and commercial success? *—Leonard N. Previte*

FOLLOW THAT DREAM: Delivered in this intimate setting, with music stripped down to just the essence of a beat, Springsteen's poetry and lyrics were the real star of the evening. The characters in "Sandy," "State Trooper," "When You're Alone," and "Darkness" just sprang to life and pleaded with us from the stage to hear their plight. That Springsteen is one of the best writers of stories on the human condition is nowhere more evident than in "Black Cowboys," arguably his best story-song ever. Each song further explored what it means to be human with all its anguish, sacrifice and desires. Then like a healing balm, Bruce spread "Dream Baby Dream" over all the open wounds of raw emotions that his songs invoked. It was as if to tell us that despite everything that can go wrong, or perhaps because of it, we still have to hope. In the end it is our ability to dream that gives us our humanity. *—Brenda Van Horn*



RIKU OLKKONEN PHOTO

JULY 20
ARENA AT HARBOR YARD
BRIDGEPORT, CT

ATTENDANCE: 8,000

SETLIST: Into the Fire**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Highway 29/The Promise*/All That Heaven Will Allow***/The River*/State Trooper/Nebraska/Maria's Bed/Reno/Nothing Man***/Racing in the Street*/Lost in the Flood*/The Rising/Spare Parts/Jesus Was an Only Son*/If I Should Fall Behind/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/Bobby Jean/Land of Hope and Dreams/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Valentine's Day."

NOTES: The longest set yet, featuring seven songs at the keys including tour premieres "All That Heaven Will Allow" and "Nothing Man," both on electric piano. Bruce mixes some lyrics from "Drive All Night" into "State Trooper." "The Promise" is dedicated to Jesse Malin and "Dream Baby Dream" to its writer, Suicide's Alan Vega; both were in attendance.

IN THE AUDIENCE: Dave Marsh and Sony Music CEO Don Ienner, in addition to Malin and Vega.

ON THE EDGE OF TOWN: Bridgeport is the part of Connecticut you don't find on the tourism brochures. It's an aging, gritty industrial city. But the Arena at Harbor Yards is a shiny new oasis on the edge of town, by the Long Island Sound. Perfect, then, for a man bringing with him themes of hope and redemption. Bruce seems to be supremely confident compared to the beginning of the tour, bringing out rarities like "All That Heaven Will Allow" and "Nothing Man." The 27-song show wasn't quite perfect thanks to sound problems, but it was damn close. "The Promise" was as good as it gets, easily the best I've ever seen Bruce at the piano. He blew one line, singing "tires rushing by in the rain" instead of "for all the lost lovers and fixed games," and smiled. But he didn't miss a note, as was the case all night. "I knew coming back to Connecticut was a good idea," he said at the end of the show. Yeah, it sure was. —*Peter Abraham*

JULY 23
PHILIPS ARENA
ATLANTA, GA

SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Nothing Man***/Incident on 57th Street*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All I'm Thinkin' About/I'm on Fire****/Reno/Sad Eyes***/Valentine's Day*/Lost in the Flood*/The Rising/Darkness on the Edge of Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/If I Should Fall Behind/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street?/My Best Was Never Good Enough/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Valentine's Day."

NOTES: Tour premieres are one thing; in Atlanta, Bruce pulls out two songs *never* played live: "Sad Eyes" and "Valentine's Day." Until tonight, "Valentine's Day" was the only one of Springsteen's album tracks that had yet to be performed in concert. "Incident" and "Lost in the Flood" are played by request.

IN THE AUDIENCE: *Devils & Dust* and *The Rising* producer Brendan O'Brien, to whom Bruce dedicates "Nothing Man"; Trey Anastasio of the recently disbanded Phish, to whom he dedicates "Darkness on the Edge of Town."

SAD EYES: When he started "Sad Eyes," I broke into tears, and I was about 30 feet in front of the electric piano, which was even more mind-blowing. This is the song I've been waiting for since the day *Tracks* came out, and it fit so beautifully into this tour's sonic structure, complete with the falsetto vocals. —*Anita Grenda*

VALENTINE'S DAY: He moved to the piano, where he said, "I believe I've never played this one live before, either. You're getting a never-played-before double-header. This is from *Tunnel of Love*, and it's by request..." and proceeded to play a beautiful "Valentine's Day." It just got more passionate as it went, really building with the repetition of "my lonely valentine" and ending with a beautiful harmonica piece. Many in the audience immediately rose in applause. And as Bruce held his hands over the top of his eyes (to see the audience better), the lighting guy shone the front bank of lights onto the crowd, and the entire audience got up and gave him a standing ovation. Bruce responded by standing at the piano, taking a bow, and then sitting down again and joking, "There's a lighting guy that knows how to earn his money." —*Joe Lewin*

"I CAN DIE NOW"

Suicide's ALAN VEGA on Springsteen and "Dream Baby Dream" By CARYN ROSE

On the first U.S. leg of the D&D tour, in Chicago, Bruce encored with a haunting song performed on pump organ—"Dream Baby Dream," later identified as a cover of a song by the band Suicide. The song has closed every show since then. *Backstreets* sat down with Suicide vocalist Alan Vega to discuss what a punk revolutionary who doesn't use guitars—ever—and the Guitar Slinger From Central New Jersey could possibly have in common.

"I never heard anything avant-garde. To me it was just New York City Blues," Alan Vega has said. Sonic revolutionaries that eschewed the traditional bass/guitar/drum format, Suicide were nothing short of punk auteurs. Featuring Martin Rev on keyboards and Vega on vocals, their minimalist rock and dramatic, confrontational performances would later pave the way for artists such as Soft Cell, Jesus & Mary Chain, Human League and Primal Scream. Following their first album in 1977, Suicide recorded "Dream Baby Dream" in New York in 1979, with Ric Ocasek producing, and the song was initially released as a 12-inch single. Their name came up a lot around 1982 when *Nebraska* came out, the bleak minimalism of that album influenced probably not a little bit by Suicide, and Bruce once called Suicide's "Frankie Teardrop" "one of the most amazing songs I ever heard." At the end of July in Bridgeport, CT, Bruce dedicated that night's performance of "Dream Baby Dream" to Vega, who was in the audience that night.

ALAN VEGA: I'm still a little high from that show [7/20/05]. Now I can die—not only is he playing "Dream Baby Dream," but it's the big encore song, the last song of the show. And what blew me more apart was—after the show, people are leaving, the lights go on, and they're playing this music. I go, wow, that's a great thing... this music, it wasn't your typical rock 'n' roll music, it was sophisticated, symphonic—it was really, really great. And I'm standing there, waiting to go backstage to see Bruce, when it dawns on me: this thing sounds familiar! And then, *bam!* It hits me, it's *my* song, "Dujang Prang"! And he's been playing *that* all the time! *[Editor's note: the usual walk-out song is "Slow Jam" by Four Tet; Vega's "Dujang Prang," part of Bruce's extensive walk-in selection, was played after the Bridgeport show, obviously in honor of Vega's attendance.]*

What did you think of Bruce's version of "Dream Baby Dream?"

This is the first time this has ever happened to me. A lot of bands have done my stuff, Suicide stuff, and they basically try and copy and do it the way that you do it. Thank god, finally somebody did their version of it. He interpreted my song, he did it his way—and such a great way, that I'm going to have to sing it that way, or not sing it at all any more!

So when did you first hear that that Bruce was covering "Dream Baby Dream," and how did you find out?

I forget exactly... [my manager] Liz got a call from somebody, I guess in Chicago... and somebody knows my A&R guy at Elektra, and he sent me an email that said, "Bruce is doing your song." At first I didn't believe it. And then I heard it was the last encore song, and then more email started coming in, "he's doing it again," wherever he was. And I thought, "Well, now I can die."

Who made the arrangements to bring you to the Bridgeport show?

I don't know how it happened—Jesse [Malin] called me, what I heard was that they were talking about me.

What was it like?

I went up to the show, and he's doing the soundcheck. I'm sitting with Jesse and three or four other people, and Bruce comes over to the side of the stage with a big shit-eating grin on his face, and he gives me a bear hug. It's like nothing has changed since the last time I saw him, 24 years ago, or whatever it was. That's Bruce. He's so cool, he's down to earth, the way he dresses, and always asking me about my shit.

He said, "You know, Alan, if Elvis was alive today, he'd be you... you know, Alan, you're 20 years ahead of your time." And I told him that in Europe, people use the word *icon* to describe me, but in America, I'm a complete zero. And he said, "I know, every time I go to Europe, that's the only place I can get your records!" But you know, he understands. Two guys touring, over 30 years of our lives... he's amazing.

I know he wants to be Roy Orbison; I know, deep down, he's going for that high note, that Roy thing. The funniest thing I've ever seen with him is on that Roy Orbison tribute *[Black & White Night]*, he talks about trying to get to the high note: "What am I supposed to do? Cut my balls off just to get that note?" *[Laughs]*

But what a great night, I was flying for days on end. We were in the front row, not quite center, but, hey. And a great meal backstage, I felt like royalty. It felt wonderful—it's one of the highlights of my life, I'll tell ya.

That second song...

"Reason to Believe."

That singing into the mouth harp, and I immediately flipped—it's like an American Indian thing, and there's a statement right there, too. I was sitting there going, "Holy shit! This is great." That's the last thing I said to him when I left the show that night: "Bruce, that second song... that was fucking amazing, man."

Tell us about the first time you met.

We were both recording in the same studio, the Power Station, here in New York. He was doing *The River* in studio A, and Suicide were working on the second Suicide record, with Ric Ocasek producing. Ric and Bruce knew each other, and he said, "Hey, Bruce, come in and check this out." He loved it right away, man, and we hung out for days. Bruce is just this great guy, you know, and I said, "Bruce, let's go and get a drink." And he said, "No, my manager doesn't want me to..."—what's his name?

Landau.

Right, "Landau, he doesn't want me to." And I said, "Come on in the men's room, Bruce." I had a little bottle of vodka with me—that I always have with me in the recording studio—and here we are, two guys, in the bathroom, like in high school, smoking cigarettes or something. And it felt like we were in high school—with Bruce, he's just like the kind of guy you think you've known all your life.

Do you remember what you were talking about, drinking vodka in the bathroom at the Hit Factory?

I really don't remember. Yakkety-yakkety. But here's another story: at the Hit Factory, after the record was finished, a day was set aside for the record company [to hear it]. We were on Ze Records at the time, supposedly Arista Records was going to pick it up and distribute it, and Arista was pretty hot then—we were amazed that that was a possibility. So they came in, two or three of them from the label, and Bruce was there, and Ric played the whole thing all the way through. And at the end, there was deadly silence. It was kind of dark in there too. And all of a sudden you hear: "Man! That was fuckin' great!" Man, I'll never forget it, coming out with, you know, that growl? *[Imitates gravelly Bruce voice]* And he walked out and shook my hand in front of everybody. That's why I say, these moments with Bruce, they become highlights of my life.

When Nebraska came out, there were many, many comparisons in the press between that record and your music. How did it make you feel?

Good for him—that he listened to me and managed to make it commercial! Bruce was embracing us back then, in '81, every now and then I'd see quotes in the press, he called "Frankie Teardrop" the most horrific song in all rock 'n' roll, and he talked about Suicide every now and then through the years.

On the first Suicide album, there's a song called "Keep On Dreaming" that bears a passing resemblance to "Dream Baby Dream." Is there a relationship between the two songs?

I think they basically came out of the same thing; "Dream Baby Dream" came out later. The way me and Marty work—many, many moons ago when we actually rehearsed, that was how we would come up with new songs. Marty would come in with some ideas, and if something struck me, I'd start to sing to it, just what came out of my head. We had "Keep on Dreaming," and "Dream Baby Dream" was kind of the same thing, but I was getting better at the singing. So it's all from the same thing, I think; it did come out of me wanting to make a more positive statement about things, with that second album, more like street poetry.

How would you describe your relationship to Bruce's music? On the surface, most people would think you would be polar opposites.

When I first started hearing Bruce, I liked it. And I'd see things with him in the paper or whatever, and when I first started hearing his music—I basically came up with Elvis and Roy Orbison and those guys, I was an old rock 'n' roll head from way back, so I always loved rock 'n' roll.

Hearing Bruce at the time we were first starting Suicide, too, Marty [Rev] and I were in another world already: we had rejected the 60's thing, we knew that was dead as far as we were concerned, and drums were dead, and guitars were dead. But when I heard Bruce... theoretically, it shouldn't have been my kind of music, it was something I was rejecting, but I don't know why, I loved it. His lyrics, and his *voice*—there's something in his voice, the inexplicable thing that critics can't talk about *at all*. Elvis' voice, Bruce's voice, Roy Orbison's voice, that's a musical instrument. But nobody seems to be able to write about it intellectually the way they could write about the guitar or the keyboards. You can't explain magic, and he has that magic, period. He is a genius.

I also felt... I grew up in Brooklyn, on the streets—and Bruce, you can tell, was a street guy! Brooklyn, Jersey, it's the same thing. I could tell right away, by the way his lyrics were, the intensity—punk or not. Because punk was such a funny word. Elvis was a punk, Johnny Cash was one of the biggest bad-asses, Jerry Lee Lewis, Eddie Cochran, all those guys—they were rebels when rock 'n' roll was still for rebels and failures.

I was so excited about going to see Bruce [on this tour] and meeting him again, so that even before I went, I was flying. People were coming up to me and saying, "Why are you excited to see Bruce? You're so much cooler than he is." And I said, "No fucking way, what are you talking about?" I was embarrassed. "I'm cooler than he is, are you out of your fucking mind? He's Bruce. He's the man." They don't understand—we seem to come from such different worlds, but no.

What's your favorite Springsteen song?'

"Dream Baby Dream." On my death bed, that's the last thing I'm going to listen to. I'll play it at my funeral.

JESSE MALIN'S SUICIDE MISSION

Bruce fan and punk rock historian engineers the behind-the-scenes reunion of the summer

I'd been thinking about Alan, because I always listen to Suicide when I travel, and I just read that book that came out, *No Compromise* [a biography of Suicide by David Nobakht]. I heard about Bruce covering "Dream Baby Dream," and I was going to the Connecticut show, because there wasn't a New York show proper. And I thought, "Wow, I wonder if Alan knows about this; I'm sure he's heard by now." Because, you know, the internet and everything, it's so kooky.

I had met Alan through Ric Ocasek. I had been a fan, and I was making a record with my old band, D Generation, in 1996, at Electric Lady [with Ocasek producing], and I was like, can we get Alan to come in and sing? "Oh, yeah, he'll come in." And Alan came in, and he took all the guitars out of the mix, and he knocked the mix down... and he just went in there and started riffing. It became mixed into the track on this record we did, *No Lunch*, in '96.

And I'd see Alan, and I'd see Ric Ocasek at Suicide shows, and see them around, and say hey. Alan was always really cool, a guy who would sit and talk with you. I remember when we were little kids we'd see him at the Limelight—he'd be holding court at the bar upstairs, and he'd be talking about the president, and music, and politics. You could just always tell that he was a lot hipper than most of the people that were out there posing as rock stars, especially in the cock-rock, hair band Limelight '80's/'90s/GNR days.

So I guess I thought to myself, well, I kind of know Alan, and I said to a friend of mine, "Do you think Bruce would like it if Alan came out to the show?" I thought Alan would really like it, and I've gotten to know Bruce a little bit, and I was like, Alan's got to see this.

So I got in touch with his manager, and she e-mailed back saying Alan would like to go, give him a call. So I called him up, and we started talking—it had been awhile, he was always sweet and nice. So we met up on St. Mark's Place and got into my friend's truck, and we drove up to soundcheck and those guys hit it off. It was really nice to sit with Alan. Even after Bruce's set ended, "Dujang Prang" came on, and that was really cool—it was just a fun night.

A lot of people who didn't know what ["Dream Baby Dream"] was were telling me, "Man, there's this song, we didn't know what it is, and we could hear it go on for 15 minutes or half an hour, this trance...." And Bruce was telling Alan backstage before the show, "You gotta see how people react to the song, because they just don't know what to think, but they're mesmerized."

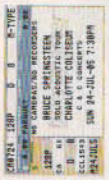
That's what's great about [Springsteen], to have the balls to do that—just the covers that he's done over the years, the Jimmy Cliff song that became the hit "Trapped"... There was some talk backstage: we were saying, "Alan, you better hope Bruce records this some day!" But he covers so many things. I think I saw a list once of everything he's covered over the years, it's pretty amazing. Let's hope this one stays in the set.

—As told to Caryn Rose

LEN MACQUEEN PHOTO

Pittsburgh, PA
July 28, 2005.

JULY 24
CHARLOTTE COLISEUM
CHARLOTTE, NC



ATTENDANCE: 9,000
SETLIST: Into the Fire**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/When You're Alone***/Two Faces*/The River*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All I'm Thinkin' About/Highway Patrolman/Reno/Nothing Man***/Real World*/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/If I Should Fall Behind/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Blinded By the Light/Wild Billy's Circus Story/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

NOTES: Springsteen clearly has some fondness for Charlotte as the longtime home of his cousin Frank, and several personal anecdotes add to the warmth of this relaxed performance. The mention of "Caroline" gets a huge cheer in "All I'm Thinkin' About," and Bruce reveals the inspiration for the setting: "It rhymed with *wine*." "Highway Patrolman" is played for People of Faith Against the Death Penalty. Bruce dips way back into his past with the encores, bringing out "Blinded" and a rough but fun "Wild Billy's Circus Story," the latter by request.

STEP AWAY FROM THE MIC: "Into the Fire" on the pump organ sounded like a bagpipe dirge from an Irish funeral—the perfect accompaniment for a song about firefighters running into a burning building. "When You're Alone" and "Two Faces" were the concert's two big *holy shit* moments and were played back-to-back in amazing renditions at the keys.

Playing only six songs from the new album caused this show to lose some of the thematic continuity of the earlier ones. Other than that, the biggest difference since my last show in Boston was the amount of off-mic singing, featured on about four songs. Hearing his natural voice resonate through an arena, unadulterated by amplification, was amazing. The crowd knew it, got quieter when he did it, and applauded louder when he was done. And while he was less talkative than at some of the other concerts I've been to, the banter did change significantly. It was less political, mostly focusing on his cousin Frankie. "He was a little older than me. He played the accordion—and I thought that was the coolest instrument I'd ever seen." And I got a nice wave from Bruce on the way out when I saw him behind the stage. —*Zach Everson*

JULY 26
GREENSBORO COLISEUM
GREENSBORO, NC

ATTENDANCE: 9,000
SETLIST: If I Should Fall Behind**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/All That Heaven Will Allow***/Tougher Than the Rest*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All I'm Thinkin' About/Galveston Bay/Reno/Valentine's Day*/The River*/The Rising/Darkness on the Edge of Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Waitin' on a Sunny Day/Wild Billy's Circus Story/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

NOTES: "If I Should Fall Behind" opens; previously performed on guitar and piano on this tour, it's played for the first time on the pump organ. "Valentine's Day" is performed for the second time ever, a strong rendition that, along with "Tougher than the Rest" and "All that Heaven Will Allow" makes for a three-song slice of *Tunnel of Love*. "Galveston Bay" is dedicated to People of Faith Against the Death Penalty. And toward the end of the set, the tour premiere of "Two Hearts" on acoustic guitar is followed by the return of "Leah," bridged by Bruce noting, "Same story, different words."

PRESS: "BOSS'S WORDS RISE ABOVE MUSIC." Park Puterbaugh in *Go Triad:* The crowd listened raptly to the show, and you could've heard a pin drop through much of it. Springsteen was obviously appreciative of their respectful attention. It was, to be quite honest, not an easy or conventionally entertaining performance, but one that was rewarding precisely because it reached so deeply.

My only quibble had to do with the price of tickets, which at $75 and $85 excluded a lot of devoted but cash-strapped fans who would've loved to have been there. Having 15,000 people singing along to "Waitin' on a Sunny Day" would've been even more amazing.

NOTHING COMPARES 2 THIS: Fairfax and Charlotte were nothing compared to this! You can tell he really loves playing in Greensboro, and I'm proud of my hometown for being such a great audience. It's interesting to see how the show has changed over the course of the tour—

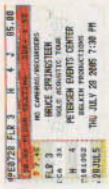
there's not as much storytelling and new material. I think that fans who only see these shows might be missing out on some cool insight into the new songs. But hey, I ain't complainin'! This was one hell of a way for me to end my small series of shows. —*Rick Barreau*

MY STUNNING VALENTINE: Over the past two shows in North Carolina, Springsteen shredded my list of songs I wanted to hear live that I hadn't heard before. On another note, I'm surprised to feel this way, but I miss "Black Cowboys," which has been dropped from the setlist of late. While Bruce plays numerous songs about parents and children, most of them are from the adult perspective. It'd flesh out that theme if he included one song that focused on the child.

I wasn't expecting "Galveston Bay" after the death penalty spiel. After all, the song is about a man acquitted and a murder that didn't happen. It's one of the numbers from *Joad*, however, that's in need of a new arrangement.

"Valentine's Day": the granddaddy of all *holy shit* moments. He introduced it by saying he played it for the first time the other night but wanted to try it again. I got that stupid look I've only gotten a few other times. Think Red Sox winning the World Series, think wandering Venice, think first time in a nudie bar. —*Zach Everson*

JULY 28
PETERSEN EVENTS CENTER
PITTSBURGH, PA



SETLIST: My Beautiful Reward**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Youngstown/Long Time Comin'/For You*/The River*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All I'm Thinkin' About/One Step Up/Reno/All That Heaven Will Allow***/Real World*/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Darkness on the Edge of Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Waitin' on a Sunny Day/Growin' Up/Homestead (with Joe Grushecky)/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

NOTES: In addition to Grushecky joining in for the "Homestead" tour premiere, another local special is "Youngstown," not played since Bruce was last in Pennsylvania, in May. The night's second tour premiere, "One Step Up" receives a standing ovation.

IN THE AUDIENCE: Kenny Chesney, Renee Zellweger, Keith Urban, Andy Sheehan, Joe Grushecky with family (and most of the Houserockers).

STEELTOWN BOSS: A much different show than Cleveland—Bruce was much looser. Much like the *Tom Joad* tour, the "house rules" weren't mentioned in Pittsburgh. I don't know if he stopped doing it altogether, but it made for a raucous show.

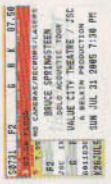
"One Step Up" was just brilliant. Bruce's voice has changed so that it sounds more like he means it than ever before. Bruce sent it out to "Kenny, thanks for the card." I later found out that Kenny Chesney had covered the song on one of his discs.

Bruce dedicated a great "For You" to Johnny Grushecky. It had a much different feel than the guitar version from the recent Flood Aid; I thought his piano playing made the song. "All I'm Thinkin' About" was dedicated to Dezi Grushecky. You can tell Bruce has kids—what you do for one you do for the other. The song was fast and really lifted an already high mood.

When the eBay electric piano appeared Bruce said, "Let's give the people a happy song, I think I've got one or two of those." With that he went into "All That Heaven Will Allow." As a big fan of *Tunnel of Love*, this was a big thrill. I noticed Bruce laughing during the song—afterward, he explained that his mic was dropping and he thought he'd have to sing on the floor.

There was hearty reception for my personal hero, Joe Grushecky. He and Bruce did a spirited version of "Homestead," trading verses and guitar licks. —*Zeke Caresani*

JULY 31
SCHOTTENSTEIN CENTER
COLUMBUS, OH



SETLIST: Lift Me Up***/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Back in Your Arms*/For You*/State Trooper/Cynthia/One Step Up/Reno/When You're Alone***/Valentine's Day*/Lost in the Flood*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/Bobby Jean/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

NOTES: Three tour premieres: "Lift Me Up" (which Springsteen wrote and recorded for the John Sayles 1999 film *Limbo*) on electric piano; "Back in Your Arms" at the piano; and the

SECOND CHANCES
Introducing "Long Time Comin'"

I wrote this song... I guess it was four or five years after I had kids. That first baby comes along, and it's like "Oh, Jesus has been born!" [Laughs] "Step back, this is what we've been waiting for—Jesus is here!" And you go outside, and everything looks different, and you're all high, and you can't figure out why everybody's still shopping and driving around. The world should stop—Jesus is with us now! Then about 14 years later, Jesus thinks you're an idiot. That's the only problem....

This is kind of a song about second chances. Everybody thinks that when they have their kids, they're gonna do it all right—they're not going to make any of the mistakes their folks made. And in a way, it is a way we honor our parents: we try to pick the best of what they did and we try to leave the rest.

It doesn't always work. Because, you know, not only do I catch my kids acting like me, I catch them acting like my *dad*. [Laughs] That's when you know you fucked it up—you didn't do it right, you missed it, one slipped through, there.... So anyway, this is a song about second chances, about trying to get all those things as right as you can.

—4/30/05, Glendale, AZ

This a song about having kids. You know, you kind of go through three stages. When they're little, you're kind of the benevolent hand of God in their lives. And then they get a little bit older, and you're a kind of tolerable idiot. And then—I'm worried about the next step: fucking idiot. I hate to say it but I can feel it coming...

So when they come along, they do give you a chance to sort of—you know, you think you're not going to make any of the mistakes your parents made and all that stuff. Which, of course, you will. I had a fight with my boy the other night, and the next thing I hear coming out of the room... *[Bruce mimics scathing rock guitar with his own]*. What was I gonna say, "Turn it down"? That ain't gonna work!

—*5/24/05, Dublin, Ireland*

Following "My Father's House":

Yeah, well, *now* the shoe is on the other foot, unfortunately. And wherever my father is, he's rollin' in his grave laughin' his ass off. "Haaah! So, you thought it was so easy, Mr. Big Shot!"

[Laughs] Ain't it true!

We had the first teenage party the other night. I'm not hated yet; I'm just sort of mildly loathed right now. I've settled for loathing, hoping I don't get to the hated part.

So first teenage party wasn't bad—girls showed up for the first time, they showed! There wasn't a lot of communication going on, but they were there! The boys were playin' it pretty cool.

Of course, I had to get out of there. You can't stand around and watch, you know. It's not a zoo.

So, I hid behind a bush.

Yeah, yeah, it's pathetic....

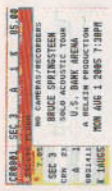
—*8/7/05, Milwaukee, WI*

RON VALLE PHOTOS

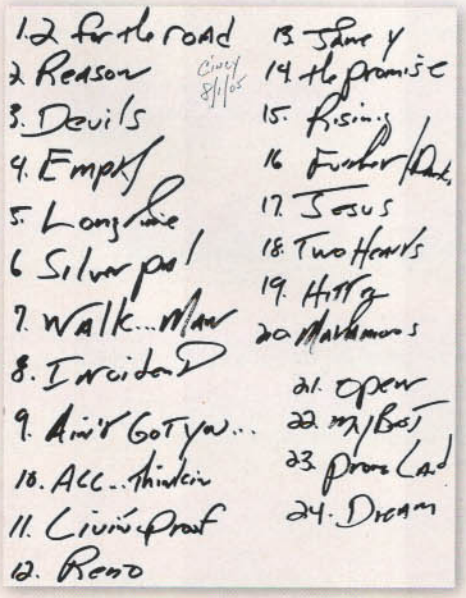
first-ever acoustic "Cynthia," which one repeat attendee called "the most rocking song on the entire tour."

AN INSPIRING SIGHT: The two big surprises of the evening were "Lift Me Up" and "Cynthia." Once he walked towards the electric piano instead of the pump organ to start the show, I knew I was in for a special evening. Then when he announced that he'd never played this song before, I was floored. Right off the bat, he had the audience fully engaged. Rarities aside, the tweaks and improvements he made to the "core" songs were also big news for me. Without question, his performances on "The Rising," "Long Time Comin'," "Reno," "The Hitter," and "Devils & Dust" were much stronger than his earlier shows. He did some amazing things with his voice as he sang into the microphone from different angels and distances—very powerful. —*Steve Radzimski*

AUGUST 1
U.S. BANK ARENA
CINCINNATI, OH



SETLIST: Two for the Road***/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Empty Sky/Long Time Comin'/Silver Palomino/Janey Don't You Lose Heart***/The Promise*/The River*/Ain't Got You/All I'm Thinkin' About/Living Proof/Reno/Walk Like a Man***-*/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Darkness on the Edge of Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Open All Night/This Hard Land/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**



NOTES: Bruce opens the show on electric piano again, this time with never-before-played "Tunnel of Love" B-side, "Two for the Road." In the electric guitar slot, a Buddy Holly-esque "Ain't Got You" emerges, last played on the *Tunnel* tour as an intro to "She's the One." (And with that, amazingly, only one song from *Tunnel of Love* remains to be played on this tour, the album's title track.) "Living Proof" is a third tour debut; "Janey Don't You Lose Heart" and "Walk Like a Man" get their second tour airings. Springsteen sings a bit of "Easier Said Than Done," a 1963 hit by The Essex, while talking about "Two Hearts."

THE LONG ROAD: A steamy night in the Queen City found Bruce in top form and ready to rock. Loose and relaxed, Bruce broke out some gems for us in a show that gave Rosemont a run for its money. "Two for the Road"—*wow!*—was sweet, heartfelt, and much longer (thanks to Bruce's extended piano work on the bridge) than the studio version. A great surprise and quite moving.

"Ain't Got You"—no flippin' way! This baby was a scorcher on the white Gretsch, broken string and all. I love that Bruce is finally unleashing the *Tunnel* material for us; "Walk Like a Man" simply lifted the emotional bar. The tears in his eyes took this baby to a whole other level. He introduced it by telling a touching story about how he and his sister used to go down the neighborhood church for weddings, and they would collect the rice that was thrown at the bride and groom. Then they would save the rice and use it to throw again at the next wedding. —*Kirk J. Marley*

AUGUST 3
VAN ANDEL ARENA
GRAND RAPIDS, MI

SETLIST: Tunnel of Love***/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Black Cowboys/Long Time Comin'/Sherry Darling***/The River*/Part Man Part Monkey/Cynthia/One Step Up/Reno/Nothing Man***/I Wish I Were Blind*/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Further On (Up the Road)/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//It's Hard to Be a Saint in the City/Ain't Got You/Bobby Jean/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

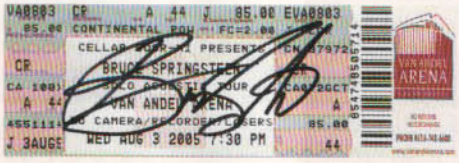
SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Backstreets," "Sherry Darling," "Tunnel of Love," "Mona," "Ain't Got You," "Incident on 57th Street," "Car Wash," and even a snippet of "Thunder Road."

NOTES: Bruce opens an intense show with an electric piano version of "Tunnel of Love"—the last song from that album remaining to be performed on the tour. Other tour premieres include a meandering "Sherry Darling," also on electric piano, and "It's Hard to Be a Saint in the City" on acoustic guitar to lead off the encore.

PRESS: John Sinkevics in the *Grand Rapids Press:* ...Still, there were flaws: Standing alone in front of thousands to perform songs you haven't played live in years will reveal blemishes even if your heart is in every song. Springsteen stumbled on a lyric, fumbled a piano chord on "Sherry Darling," had to depend on notes for some songs on the keyboards. His mic even went dead at one point, and the set pacing and song order weren't ideal.

It wasn't a perfect concert by any means, but it was real as real gets—as real as the war-torn imagery of "Devils & Dust," as real as the ugliness of the broken dreams heard in Springsteen's plaintive wails. And that's a beautiful thing.

GRAND PERFORMANCE: Bruce joked that he "couldn't find the rapids, but everything was indeed grand." That was certainly true of his performance. It was a very cool show, one whose evolution can be fully appreciated if you saw some of his earlier great stops on the tour. There was a looser feel than the opening Detroit and spellbinding Rosemont shows, and it had Bruce moving beyond some of his studied performances from earlier in the tour. Some staples came off the best with the increased intensity and the varied dynamics found in "Devils & Dust," "Further On (Up the Road)," "The Rising," "Jesus Was an Only Son," and "The Promised Land." "Cynthia" gained momentum and rocked hard. Bruce began "It's Hard to Be a Saint in the City" as he returned to the stage and nailed it. —*Dave Miller*



BLANK FACES: Bruce strolled over to the electric piano and said, "This is a summer song, so happy summer! I hope I don't fuck this up, too...." With the audience laughing, he then went into the tour debut of "Sherry Darling." The electric piano gave the song a "heaviness" that I've never experienced before, but it was an interesting interpretation. I might have liked to see it done a cappella or with an acoustic guitar, but this was nonetheless a wonderful version and was very well received.

It seemed that not one in ten people in the audience had bought the new album, though. There were many blank looks in the crowd from what I could see. The place began about three-quarters full (no sell-out here), and by the time of the last song, I'd say about 20 percent of the crowd had left. —*Anthony Petrosino*

AUGUST 6
FOX THEATRE
ST. LOUIS, MO

ATTENDANCE: 4,000

SETLIST: Back in Your Arms***/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Black Cowboys/Long Time Comin'/County Fair***/The River*/Part Man, Part Monkey/All the Way Home/Highway Patrolman/Reno/Nothing Man***/Backstreets*/The Rising/Lucky Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Cynthia/Wild Billy's Circus Story/My Best Was Never Good Enough/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

NOTES: The only theater stop on this leg, with two stunning tour premieres: the rarely played "County Fair," on electric piano, and the first-ever solo performance of "Backstreets," on piano. The latter, played by request for a young fan, is Springsteen's first foray into the *Born to Run* album on this tour.

THANKS, BOBBY!: Phenomenal, from the opener of "Back in Your Arms." Bruce was in a confident, playful mood, and performances of "County Fair," "Wild Billy," and "Cynthia" took the audience for a wild ride. The piano version of "Backstreets" brought the house down, dedicated to "Bobby, the boy with the banjo." The audience was reverent and respectful, which seemed to embolden Bruce to introduce subtle and nuanced versions of songs—especially "The Promised Land," which was far from a cursory version. Having seen several shows so far, this was definitely a stand out. —*Blake Hoel*

ALAN CHITLIK PHOTO

Eyes wide shut
Seattle, WA
August 11, 2005.

AUGUST 7
BRADLEY CENTER
MILWAUKEE, WI

SETLIST: Shut Out the Light**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/My Father's House/Long Time Comin'/Frankie*/Back in Your Arms***/Ain't Got You/State Trooper/Nebraska/Reno/All That Heaven Will Allow***/Point Blank***/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Darkness on the Edge of Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Leah/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Open All Night/Growin' Up/Does This Bus Stop at 82nd Street?/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

NOTES: A dark performance opens with the B-side "Shut Out the Light," last performed on the *Joad* tour. The other tour premiere of the night, the rare gem "Frankie," sounds as tight as can be on piano. And three songs on the electric guitar: "Ain't Got You," "State Trooper," and "Open All Night."

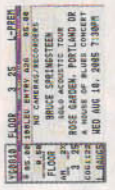
PRESS: "SPRINGSTEEN REBORN IN SMALLER VENUES." Greg Kot in the *Chicago Tribune:* ...Springsteen is making some of the best music of his career this summer, and he hasn't been this engrossing and unpredictable on a concert stage since the '70s.... The singer walked the line between loose-limbed self-confidence and iron-willed purpose; he was smiling and laughing like a man completely at ease with himself and his audience. He was clearly having a ball rummaging around in the back alleys of his extraordinary songbook.

It prompts a heretical conclusion: At this point in his career, the singer is better off without the E Street Band. He may not sell as many concert tickets or albums. But he's a more daring artist: darker, stranger, more at liberty to challenge himself and surprise his audience....

ON THE EDGE OF MILWAUKEE: This was by far the darkest of the four shows I saw on the tour. Five songs from *Nebraska* combined with the "Shut Out the Light" opener, "Point Blank" and "Darkness on the Edge of Town" painted the regular set black. Bruce acknowledged the darkness as he introduced "All That Heaven Will Allow," a song not on his handwritten setlist. Before playing it he spoke with fondness of the Raspberries and their song "Overnight Sensation." That "audible" and the first three songs of the encore thankfully brought some light to the otherwise dark show.

What started in Grand Rapids to acknowledge a flubbed lyric during "Long Time Comin'" was sung as no joke this time, but as an honest qualifier: "I hope I don't fuck it up this time." In another lyric change, "Ain't Got You" brought a believable confession: "Been paid a king's ransom for doin' what I'd do for free." —*Dave Miller*

AUGUST 10
ROSEGARDEN THEATRE OF THE CLOUDS
PORTLAND, OR



SETLIST: Soul Driver***/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Black Cowboys/Long Time Comin'/I Wish I Were Blind***-*/Frankie*/Part Man Part Monkey/Ain't Got You/One Step Up/Reno/Nothing Man***/Valentine's Day*/Lost in the Flood*/The Rising/Darkness on the Edge of Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Ramrod/Wild Billy's Circus Story/Bobby Jean/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Living Proof," "From Small Things," "Because the Night," "Frankie," and "Soul Driver"

NOTES: Springsteen acknowledges that he's been trying to play something obscure every night as he opens with the tour premiere of "Soul Driver." Another *Human Touch* song, "I Wish I Were Blind," is played for a Norwegian fan. Springsteen notes the low regard for that album among critics, calling it "star-challenged." Evan Springsteen joins his father on the road for this Pacific Northwest stretch, bringing out the guitar for "Long Time Comin'." Bruce dedicates the song to his son, noting that Evan's onstage appearance would cost him a hundred bucks.

NORWEGIAN TOUCH: I just thought I would clarify one thing regarding the Portland show. I am the Norwegian guy that Springsteen talked about before "I Wish I Were Blind." However, Bruce actually got it a little bit confused. When I met him before the show, with a small group of fans outside the arena, I asked if he could play "Soul Driver." He thought that was an excellent idea, and of course opened the show with the song. A little bit later in the show, he said I had requested "I Wish I Were Blind," and jokingly talked about *Human Touch* being "considered a masterpiece in Norway." This, of course, was just an extra added bonus for me, and made the night unforgettable.

A few nights later, in Vancouver, he came over to me when he spotted me outside the arena and signed my passport, "Soul Driver Bruce Springsteen." Which leads me to believe that he just thinks a dedication fits better before the first piano song than before the first song of the evening. —*Tor Einar Aarnes*

AUGUST 11
KEY ARENA
SEATTLE, WA

SETLIST: Living Proof**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Highway 29/Long Time Comin'/Be True***/Frankie*/The River*/Part Man Part Monkey/Ain't Got You/Highway Patrolman/Reno/Two For the Road***/Nothing Man***/Racing in the Street*/The Rising/Darkness on the Edge of Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/This Hard Land/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Growin' Up/For You/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

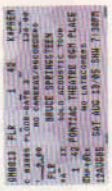
SOUNDCHECK: Includes "Living Proof," "Be True," "Two For The Road," and "American Skin (41 Shots)" on both guitar and piano.

NOTES: "Be True" tour-premieres on the electric piano. Bruce brings back two Cincinnati premieres for their second performance: "Two for the Road" and "Living Proof." The latter, played on 12-string in Cincy, opens the Seattle show on pump organ. Similarly, "For You," a piano song up to this point, is played tonight on guitar for the first time on the tour. Evan Springsteen has a guitar tech guest spot again, and Bruce reiterates, "It costs me a hundred bucks every time he comes out. Don't clap too much, it'll cost me 200 bucks!"

IN THE AUDIENCE: Eddie Vedder

HAUNTING: I had my doubts about "Living Proof" at the start, but the pump organ turned out to be a great support, and Bruce sang with a lot of passion. It was a respectful and appreciative crowd—his son Evan got a thunderous ovation when Bruce introduced him. The *Devils & Dust* material was surprisingly strong, and the loose banter between songs was very engaging. For me, the standout performance was "The River." It was one of those moments that I've only experienced at Bruce concerts: at the end he just let his voice out, rising and falling with the chord changes on the piano. It was very haunting—sounded like the wind blowing through a deserted town. —*Pat Farrell*

AUGUST 13
PONTIAC THEATRE AT GM PLACE
VANCOUVER, BC



ATTENDANCE: 7,000

SETLIST: Living Proof**/Reason to Believe/Devils & Dust/Lonesome Day/Long Time Comin'/Because the Night***/The Promise*/The River*/State Trooper/Ain't Got You/Cynthia/The Line/Reno/Janey Don't You Lose Heart***/Paradise***-*/Real World*/The Rising/Darkness on the Edge of Town/Jesus Was an Only Son*/Two Hearts/The Hitter/Matamoros Banks//Blinded By the Light/4th of July, Asbury Park (Sandy)***/The Promised Land/Dream Baby Dream**

NOTES: Wrapping up the leg in Vancouver with an "end of our summer extravaganza," Springsteen plays a lengthier show, including eight songs on piano, the most yet. "Sandy" is dedicated with a chuckle to "the professional stalkers" who have been following the tour. On the setlist but not played: "Saint in the City."

GOOD CREDIT: The show opened with "Living Proof." Has there ever been a sweeter, more evocative sentiment of feeling blessed to have children and, in effect, being saved by your chosen family unit? Later in the show he stated, "When you become a father, there's no train you wouldn't stand in front of for your kid—and that's a life sentence."

Springsteen the raconteur was in fine form. One story centered on how his extended family all lived near a Catholic church, and that in the age before video games the thing to do for kids was to go to all the funerals. He shared how strict and fear-inspiring the Church was, but also how the stories imbued him with a sense of awe and majesty.

Bruce looked and seemed tired. Although his three-hour shows with the E Street Band must be more physically demanding, these solo concerts clearly also take their toll. There is no one to spell him for extended intros or outros so he can take a breather. But the world-weary mien was fitting for tonight's songs. The stifled young man who sprang out of cages to get out of the town full of losers is now a troubadour memorializing the struggle to find a place in the world. For 140 minutes and 26 songs he enthralled us.

Bruce Springsteen is the apotheosis of rock. He has proclaimed at previous shows, "If your soul's got bad credit, it's good here tonight." Tonight I can't imagine anyone left uninspired.

—*Robert Seidlitz*

Vancouver, BC, August 13, 2005.

KEITH HAMAKAWA PHOTO

Next issue: *The final leg, Rochester 10/6/05 to Trenton 11/22/05.* As always, we depend on our readers around the world for concert coverage—special thanks this time to: Barbara Aaron, Pete Abraham, Kevin Adams, Jay Algar, Tor Einar Årnes, Peter Axelsen, Jonathan Bajek, Doug Baker, John Bakuhn, Jr, Robert Barany, David Barkauskas, Ron Barker, Rick Barreau, Mike Beder, William Benger, Becky Beyers, Timothy Birch, Jerry Birenz, Karl Birthistle, Dan Blau, Patrick Bonnard, Richard Booth, Scott Bradley, Lawrence O. Brase-Jr, Cliff Breining, Oliver Bode, John Buford, Diarmuid Callaghan, Marcy Cameron, Terence Camp, Robert Carlsson, David R. Castranio, Francesco Cattaneo, Zeke Caresani, Mike Chura, Karin Coberlangen, Beth Colleary, Douglas Corkhill, Alberto Covin, Mike De Rosa, Vinnie Del Basso, Matt Ditchey, Bill Donohoe, John Duda, Lynn E. Drury, Mark Dudkowski, Gilles Dupre, Eric Eisenstein, Danny Eitner, Evi Eleftheriadou, John Ellis, Chris Ervin, David Evans, Zach Everson, Bruce Fairbank, Pat Farrell, Franco Figari, John Fix III, Tom Friedrich, Roger Froehlich, Andre Gagne, Pierluigi Gamba, Robert Garcia, Vito Gianfrate, Audrey Gibson, Seth Ginsberg, Mike Gormley, Anita Grenda, Tobias Grönberg, Jack Grosso, Keith Hamakawa, Tony Hansen, Lars Hansson, Peter Häggström, Mauricio Heilbron Jr., Lori Hendrickson, Ian Henry, Kristof Henseler, Scott Hepburn, Blake Hoel, Espen Hugaas, Andre Hutchinson, Mark Imgrund, Linda Iorio, Kevin Jeffers, TJ Johns, Chris Johnston, Doug Joswick, Jeffrey Kaplan, Bill Kenney, Jörn

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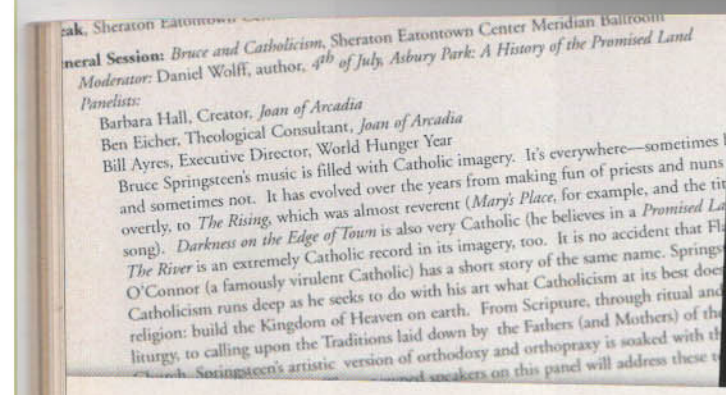
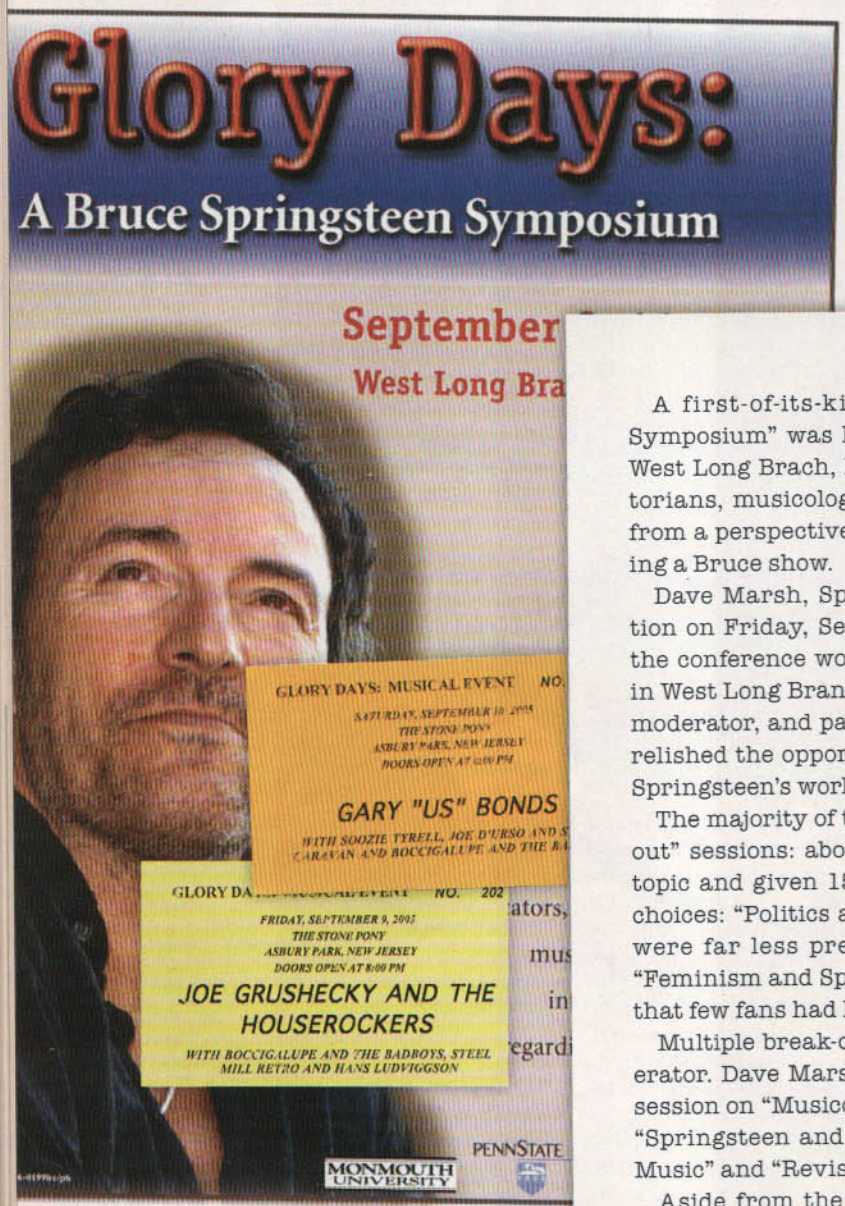
DANNY CLINCH PHOTO

Learning from 3-MINUTE RECORDS


eral Session: Bruce and Catholicism, Sheraton Eatontown Center Meridian Ballroom
Moderator: Daniel Wolff, author, 4th of July, Asbury Park: A History of the Promised Land
Panelists:
Barbara Hall, Creator, Joan of Arcadia
Ben Eicher, Theological Consultant, Joan of Arcadia
Bill Ayres, Executive Director, World Hunger Year
Bruce Springsteen's music is filled with Catholic imagery. It's everywhere—sometimes
and sometimes not. It has evolved over the years from making fun of priests and nuns
overtly, to The Rising, which was almost reverent (Mary's Place, for example, and the ti
song). Darkness on the Edge of Town is also very Catholic (he believes in a Promised La
The River is an extremely Catholic record in its imagery, too. It is no accident that Fl
O'Connor (a famously virulent Catholic) has a short story of the same name. Springs
Catholicism runs deep as he seeks to do with his art what Catholicism at its best does
religion: build the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. From Scripture, through ritual and
liturgy, to calling upon the Traditions laid down by the Fathers (and Mothers) of th
version of orthodoxy and orthopraxy is soaked with
speakers on this panel will address these


Glory Days:
A Bruce Springsteen Symposium
September
West Long Bra
GLORY DAYS: MUSICAL EVENT
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2005
THE STONE PONY
ASBURY PARK, NEW JERSEY
DOORS OPEN AT 6:00 PM
GARY "US" BONDS
WITH SOOZIE TYRELL, JOE D'URSO AND
CARAVAN AND BOCCIGALUPE AND THE
GLORY DA NO. 202
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2005
THE STONE PONY
ASBURY PARK, NEW JERSEY
DOORS OPEN AT 8:00 PM
JOE GRUSHECKY AND THE HOUSEROCKERS
WITH BOCCIGALUPE AND THE BADBOYS, STEEL MILL RETRO AND HANS LUDVIGGSON
MONMOUTH UNIVERSITY
PENNSTATE

A first-of-its-kind conference, "Glory Days: A Bruce Springsteen Symposium" was held over an extended weekend in early September in West Long Brach, NJ. The Symposium brought numerous academics, historians, musicologists, and writers together to view Bruce Springsteen from a perspective not found on the floor of Madison Square Garden during a Bruce show.

Dave Marsh, Springsteen biographer, offered the symposium invocation on Friday, September 9 at the Sheraton Eatontown Center; most of the conference would take place on the campus of Monmouth University in West Long Branch. Marsh's involvement in the conference as a speaker, moderator, and participant was a treat for fans, many of whom obviously relished the opportunity to talk to arguably the best-known writer about Springsteen's work.

The majority of the conference consisted of what were known as "break-out" sessions: about four different presenters were grouped together by topic and given 15 to 20 minutes each. Some of the topics were obvious choices: "Politics and Springsteen" or "Vietnam and Springsteen." Others were far less predicable: "Crime/Legal Issues and Springsteen" and "Feminism and Springsteen" offered perspectives into Springsteen's work that few fans had likely given much thought.

Multiple break-out sessions ran concurrently, each led by a group moderator. Dave Marsh, for example, moderated a particularly well-received session on "Musicology and Springsteen" which featured presentations on "Springsteen and Punk Rock," "Springsteen and Early 1960s American Music" and "Revisiting Human Touch and Lucky Town."

Aside from the sessions, there were numerous feature events at the conference. A presentation by Springsteen photographer Frank Stefanko was well attended, as was a discussion with E Street Band members Danny Federici and Vini Lopez, moderated by Bob Santelli. Bobby Muller spoke at length of Bruce's involvement with the Vietnam Veterans of America; author Daniel Wolff moderated a discussion among fans about racial issues within Springsteen's audience. The latter was sparked by the unfortunately early end to a break-out session on "Ethnic Diversity and Springsteen" which included an insightful presentation by Craig Werner, a university professor of African-American studies.

-- cont.

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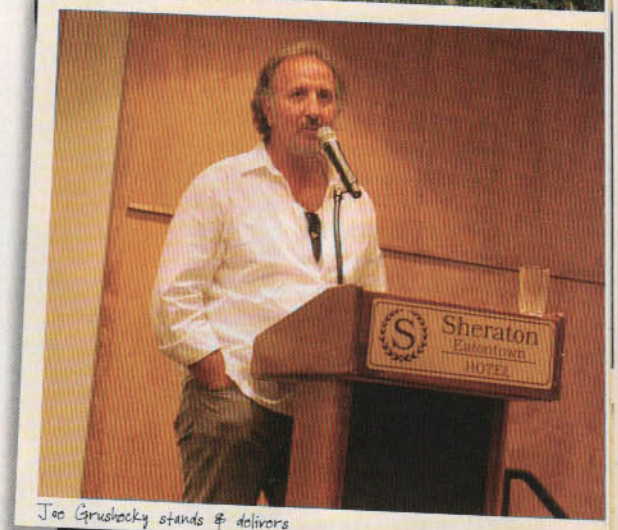
Photos by John Cavanaugh

One of the biggest highlights, and easily the surprise of the conference, was the presentation made by Thom Zimny on Sunday afternoon. Zimny, the editor of Live in New York and Live in Barcelona, spoke at length about the forthcoming Hammersmith Odeon concert film. While mum on certain details (its inclusion in the Born to Run 30th Anniversary set, while rumored, had yet to be officially announced at the time), Zimny discussed the process of creating the DVD. Unlabeled footage from multiple cameras had to be reviewed; with no sound, Zimny was forced to read lips and attempt to determine which song was being performed! He spoke of being unsure for a while if he'd be able to find all of "Kitty's Back" ("well, it's a long song"), while Springsteen would call and ask, "Do we have a complete show?" The unveiling of "She's the One" and "Quarter to Three" to an enraptured audience served as a wonderful flourish to the end of the weekend's proceedings.

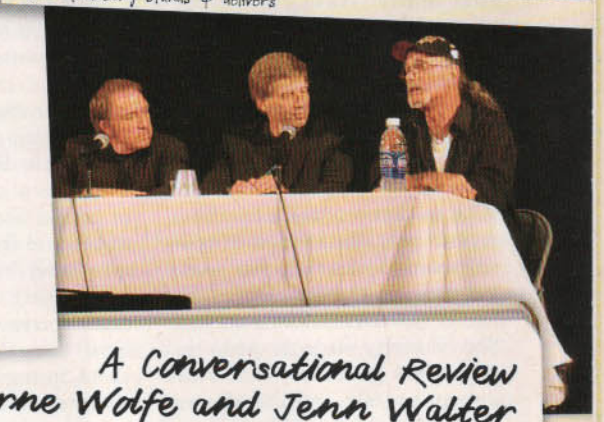
The biggest problem with the Symposium was, ironically, the massive amount of information available to fans. With multiple events scheduled at the same time, fans had to pick and choose between sessions. Additionally, there was a great inconsistency between the quality of certain panels. There were many highly knowledgeable presenters who unfortunately were not practiced speakers, which was an impediment to the success of a number of panels. The tickets to the Symposium were not inexpensive, and that may have kept some fans away, especially at a time when Springsteen was touring. The registration fee was more than $200, with many fans electing to purchase additional tickets to see the Joe Grushecky and Gary U.S. Bonds concerts held at the Stone Pony on the Friday and Saturday nights of the symposium.

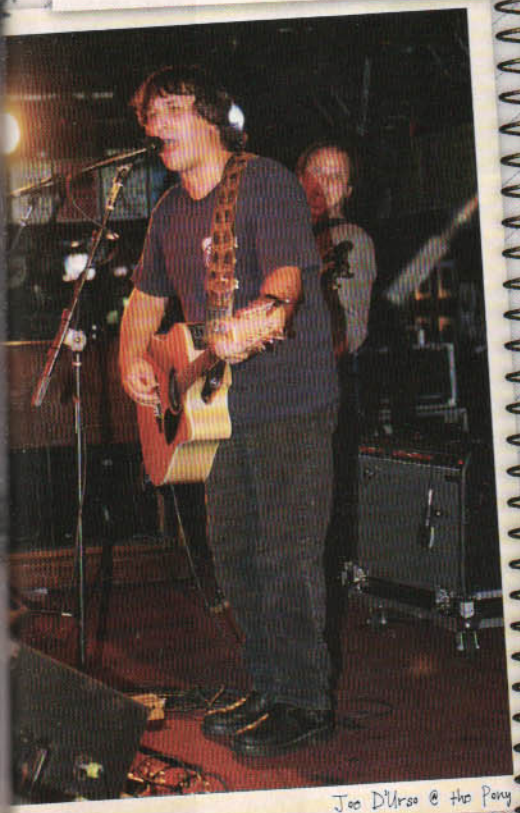
While the inaugural Springsteen Symposium certainly had a few weaknesses, it was undeniably a success. It brought together fans, fostered discussion, and offered views into Springsteen's life and work that many fans had never seen or thought of. The symposium was a large event, overflowing with information. It might not work as an annual event, but certainly would be worthy of an encore in the future.

—Glenn Radecki



Joe Grushecky stands & delivers





Joe D'Urso @ the Pony

A Conversational Review
By Lorne Wolfe and Jenn Walter

Reliving Glory Days

Among the many presenters at Glory Days were Lorne Wolfe, an associate professor of Biology, and Jenn Walter, an enterprising businesswoman. As often happens at Springsteen events, two total strangers met and the ties that bind led to a true friendship.

Jenn: I was sitting on a bench in front of Monmouth University's Bey Hall after giving up on my futile search for coffee, hoping the New Jersey sunshine would burn off the mist in my sleep-deprived head when an obvious symposiumite sat down across from me. In the Bruce-charged atmosphere of Glory Days it was easy to feel comfortable with a total stranger, and this one looked especially friendly.

Lorne: Man, I am getting too old to stay up until three a.m. and then get out of bed a few hours later. But how

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

many times can you spend a whole night at the Stone Pony, talk to Vini "Mad Dog" Lopez, dance to Joe Grushecky, and drink beer under a perfect sky chatting with Jimmy the bartender? So I decided to skip the first earliest talks and come in around 10 a.m. Not a soul was visible on the Monmouth campus. Except for...

J: I have no idea how our conversation started. He probably asked where to find coffee. I assured him there wouldn't be any until after the first session, which I was skipping to prepare for my upcoming presentation.

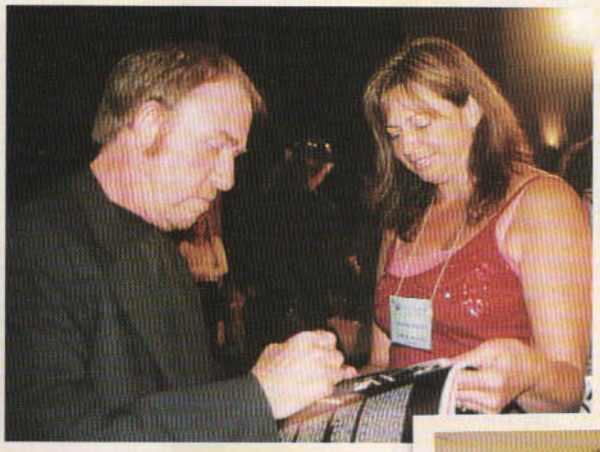
L: Yup, the coffee line is a tried-and-true ice breaker. However, the common Springsteen bond that united the approximately 300 participants was all that was needed to break any ice this weekend. I asked Jenn if she had been at the Stone Pony the previous night and what time she had gone to bed. Her response was a somewhat uncomfortable, semi-embarrassed smile. She and some friends apparently spent the early morning hours in the company of "the band" (Joe Grushecky's no less). She effusively made the point that they were genuinely interested only in her talk, and that she was a very happily married mother of five. I was still dubious.

J: Meeting the Houserockers was one among many highlights of the symposium. When they closed the show at the Pony Friday night, they announced that they had CDs available for sale which they would happily sign. Joe Grushecky kindly signed my CDs and struck up a conversation with my friends and me. We eventually ended up at the trailer where the rest of the band added their autographs. I have to admit this felt really, really cool. I was quite certain that Bruce must have been in that trailer at some time. The band seemed intrigued with the symposium in general and my presentation in particular. Even Joe, who had given an excellent talk that morning on writing songs with Bruce, seemed to want to hear what I planned to say about Biblical imagery in Springsteen's songs. After repeated refusals I gave them a brief run-through. I felt a little silly, but I knew this was never going to happen again, so I just went for it. Lorne thought I should definitely use this story to break the ice at the start of my presentation.

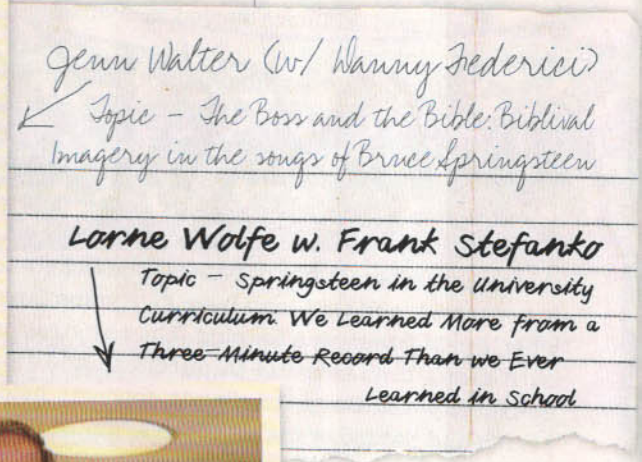
L: I told Jenn that my wife Janet could not believe that I referred to Glory Days as a scholarly event; she thought I was attending a Springsteen Trekkie convention. I regularly attend several scientific conferences each year, but the Glory Days symposium was fundamentally different. This was a get-together of people from all walks of life and from all over this planet (eight nations) with one common denominator: we had all used or really thought about Springsteen's music at some point in our lives. I wondered at times if we were actually over-thinking his writings; however, as the weekend progressed I came to admire the true magic of this 72-hour event filled with two nights of live music at the Stone Pony, engaging conversations and stimulating talks.

J: We evolved into a community.

L: Like many of the participants, I had arrived at the Sheraton Eatontown alone. The first morning of the meeting I found myself pouring a coffee in the main reception area when I spotted the symposium organizer, Mark Bernhard. He apparently had long dreamed of coordinating a Springsteen conference and now had the look of someone who could not believe the damn thing was happening. As I walked over to wish him good luck, a man who looked vaguely familiar came over as well. After chatting a minute or so, Mark introduced me to Dave Marsh. Okay, I thought, this is cool. Then a woman who clearly was a dear friend of Dave's walked over and gave him a hug—this was Barbara Hall, author, creator and producer of *Joan of Arcadia*. The next few minutes were perhaps the most bizarre of the weekend for me as Dave Marsh said, "Barbara, do you know Lorne Wolfe?"



LORI DAVIDSON PHOTO


Jenn Walter (w/ Nanny Federici)
Topic – The Boss and the Bible: Biblical Imagery in the songs of Bruce Springsteen
Lorne Wolfe w. Frank Stefanko
Topic – Springsteen in the University Curriculum. We Learned More from a Three-Minute Record Than we Ever Learned in School

I, of course, am thinking, "How the hell should she know me?" Barbara shook my hand while asking something like, "What brings you to this meeting?" I suddenly felt way out of my element but responded, "I am a biologist and university teacher. I'll be talking on how I use Springsteen's music as a tool to engage students." Her response blew me away: "Really? I always wanted to be a scientist!" As it turns out, her latest novel features a female physicist and Barbara to this day harbors a deep interest in physics and science. I left this trio to grab my second row seat for Dave Marsh's keynote address, feeling quite content to know that at least two of this morning's speakers were really nice, normal folks.

J: No one seemed normal to me that first morning. I was in awe. I could hardly believe I was listening to Dave Marsh, in the flesh, talking about Bruce Springsteen. The audience really loved his insightful line, "Bruce's records are a rough draft for what he does on stage." Following Dave was an eclectic mix of speakers.

I had no idea that Lorne was the "scientist" who fixed Barbara Hall's Apple laptop at the "Storytellers" general session which followed Dave Marsh. She was to speak first, but as soon as she settled herself at the podium something happened to her computer. Some guy (Lorne) came to the rescue, and then she cast her spell. She told us about the first time she saw Bruce in Landover, Maryland in November of 1980. That was my first, too! The concert changed the course of her life, as it did mine. As she sat in the Capital Centre that night 25 years ago, she decided to pursue her dream of being a writer. In my case, that night I met the man of my dreams (and Bruce, too, for that matter) and married him (not Bruce).

Gretchen Peters spoke sweetly of Bruce's songwriting and then sang us one of her songs. Novelist Bobbie Ann Mason was fascinating and refreshingly unassuming, both when she spoke that morning and when I saw her later that night at the Stone Pony. And I had absolutely no idea when I listened to Joe Grushecky share such detail about writing the song "Homestead" with Bruce that I

would be discussing my take on the spiritual journey in Springsteen's songs with him that very evening following his performance at the Stone Pony—where he sang, among other great songs, "Homestead."

L: I really loved Joe's stories about how he had to take sick leave from his real job, teaching, to write songs with Bruce. Many in the audience had read how Bruce worked to his own schedule, but it was great to hear this from someone who actually has written with him. Joe said: "Bruce works differently from the rest of us.... He is... *slow*."

J: After that first round of talks there was a Q&A session. The fourth question was by a guy (who, again, turned out to be Lorne) who asked the question everyone was thinking, "What do you guys think Bruce thinks of what is going on here this weekend?" Barbara Hall grabbed the mic and said, "I know the guy who asked the question, and he's a scientist. Let me answer it." And she then elegantly weaved an answer that somehow included the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle!

L: I really meant to attend Jenn's talk, "The Boss and The Bible, Biblical Imagery and the Spiritual Journey in the Songs of Bruce Springsteen." I wanted to see if she would begin by telling the audience how she practiced her talk in front of Grushecky and his band. Despite my good intentions, I did not make it. The symposium had ten concurrent breakout sessions, and prior to Jenn's talk I attended a talk on Springsteen and Punk Rock. As it turns out, I was sitting beside Colleen Sheehy, the curator of the fabulous photographic exhibit of Bruce Springsteen called *Troubadour of the Highway*. (We were very fortunate that the conference organizers were able to get the exhibit, albeit a reduced version, to Monmouth University.)

Bob Santelli, Danny Federici & Vini Lopez, from the "Walk Down E Street" panel

DEBRA L. ROTHENBERG PHOTO

A couple who clearly knew Colleen walked in and sat down behind us. The man was Frank Stefanko, photographer for the *Darkness* and *River* albums. Afterwards, Colleen introduced me to Frank, who signed my copy of his book, *Days of Hope and Dreams*. The next day I had the wonderful opportunity to show Frank the Powerpoint talk I had given the day before titled "Springsteen in the University Curriculum: We Learned More from a Three-Minute Record Than We Ever Learned in School." This was based on the work I do using Springsteen's music to engage students in my Evolution and Environmental Biology courses.

The session "Times of Hope and Dreams: A Conversation with Photographer Frank Stefanko," presented by Frank and Colleen together, was a real treat. There was clearly some true chemistry the two; using Colleen's questions as prompts, Frank demonstrated what a great storyteller he is and regaled us with Springsteen anecdotes. For example, Bruce showing up the first time at Frank's house for the shoot that would produce the album cover for *Darkness* armed only with a paper grocery bag filled with some extra shirts. Or the famous Stefanko shot of Springsteen leaning on the front fender of his new Corvette, on a snowy New Jersey street—according to Frank, "Bruce wasn't very happy taking that shot, it was like 17 degrees." But the special treat for the audience was when he revealed some new shots of Bruce taken very recently. What made this especially poignant was how the photographs taken by the same man and eye essentially spanned the past 30 years of rock 'n' roll history.

J: I also had the pleasure of meeting Stefanko. Lorne introduced us, and Frank signed my copy of his book—a great treasure, because my daughter's former bedroom closet had wallpaper identical to Stefanko's *Darkness* album cover photo, and because I bought it on Cookman Avenue in Asbury Park at the site of Bruce's *Songs* book-signing.

Danny Federici also signed his photo in Frank's book for me, right after his fascinating "Walk Down E Street" conversation with Vini Lopez. In this session they recounted the origins of the E Street Band, and we learned firsthand that *Born to Run* was "the biggest we thought we were ever going to be." "It was all about the music—not the girls, not the money." Danny told us his most memorable musical moment with Bruce was playing the accordion in "Sandy"; Vini's was "Incident."

L: Appropriately, Vini's band Steel Mill Retro had opened up the first night's Stone Pony experience. It was like going through a time warp watching Bruce's first E Street drummer play on that stage. While the next band was setting up I chatted with him Vini graciously consented to sign an autograph, and I pulled out the only thing I had available—the cover of the Glory Days Symposium program (highlighted by a large close-up of Springsteen's face) that was folded in my pocket. Vini took the cover, made some joke about "who is this guy?" and then proceeded to scribble a mustache and small beard over the portrait as he signed it. This original "Mad Dog" Lopez creation is now framed in my office.

By the time the beer was flowing I was no longer among strangers, but in a mass of new friends and colleagues. The place felt like home.

J: True to his word, Lorne sought me out to share the magic in the night on Saturday for the second Stone Pony show. Soozie Tyrell rocked and near the end of her set told the crowd, "Hey, we are all Boss fans!" Gary U.S. Bonds was hysterical: "What is this you're here for? A sympo? Symposium? I love it when you talk Caucasian!" After logging about 12 hours over two nights in the Stony Pony, we were a very tired, albeit happy, bunch. But the final sessions on Sunday were very special—and all the better that they mostly took place in a movie theater setting with the lights down. Mark Hagen of the BBC presented his 1998 documentary, *A Secret History*, and then the there was the mind-blowing first look at the '75 Hammersmith footage. By now, most *Backstreets* readers likely have seen the live DVD that comes with the *Born to Run* reissue. But we were so lucky to have a special sneak preview.

L: I am in my backyard in Statesboro, GA, swatting gnats, putting the final touches on this, my first piece for *Backstreets* as my mind fondly drifts to last weekend when Janet and I saw Bruce's excellent Tampa show...

J: I'm now sitting on a park bench in Richmond, BC, back in my real world. It is cooler and damper up here in Canada and a little piece of my heart is back there on that other bench at Monmouth University, bleary-eyed in the morning sunlight, connecting with a stranger from Georgia who once shared a city with me. Now we share a much closer bond because of Bruce Springsteen and the Glory Days Symposium. Lorne, you better be there when I return for Symposium #2, three years burning down the road.

Joe Grushecky & the Houserockers warm up for some presentation critiquing

JOHN CAVANAUGH PHOTO

Conference Call

Q&A with Mark Bernhard

By Christopher Phillips

GLORY DAYS ORGANIZER MARK BERNHARD CALLED THE SYMPOSIUM "a dream come true for one pretty regular guy from Pennsylvania who happens to be in love with the music of Bruce Springsteen." It's because that regular guy also happens to be a Senior Conference Planner at Penn State University that this dream became a reality, with a call going out to "educators, journalists, historians, musicologists, and anyone interested in scholarship regarding Bruce Springsteen" for the first—though surely not last—event of its kind. "I didn't know what would come of it," Bernhard, 38, tells *Backstreets*, "but clearly it turned into something that meant a lot to a lot of people."

Mark's passion for Springsteen shares a 30th anniversary with *Born to Run*. "I'm the youngest of three kids," he says, "and I was just 8 years old in 1975, but my brother was a senior in high school, and he was into Bruce. So the first time I listened to Bruce was *Born to Run*—I got an early start." Mark saw his first Springsteen concert ten years later, at Veterans Stadium in Philadelphia, in August of '85. "And I was already hooked, but after that it was just over, you know? It was just over for me. So now I've been 33 times—and if I could afford it, or if my wife would let me out of the house, it would be a lot more than that," he laughs.

Post-symposium, Mark continues his day job in the office of Conferences and Institutes, managing a team of conference planners and putting on other programs himself. But he's already giving thought to a Glory Days sequel, as well as beginning work on an anthology of selected papers from the first go-round—not any easy task. "Because we have so many papers," he says, "it's possible it could be a multi-volume set." Like a double album? "Exactly—it could be *The River*." Bernhard spoke with *Backstreets* by phone in November.

In the program, you mention that you started planning Glory Days in August 2003, but it was an idea that you'd been kicking around for years. When did you first envision a Springsteen symposium?

Well, I started work at my job on June 8, 1998, and I have this list that I've never taken off my wall—it's a page from my planner, June 13, 1998, and it's just got a bunch of different programming ideas I had. All the way back then, I had written "Rock 'n' Roll Music in American Society." I'm sure I had Bruce in mind, because he's my passion when it comes to music, so if you want to factor that in, it's been seven-and-a-half years in the making.

But I probably started having some really basic conversations—I think I contacted you by e-mail, and Bob Santelli—probably about four years ago. It took some time to figure out the best way to go about doing this, and it was about a year ago that it really solidified.

I had started working with a couple professors at Penn State, [co-organizers] Jerry Zolten and Ken Womack, and they got interested in the idea. And I started making some connections. Bob Santelli had told me that Dan Cavicchi, who wrote the *Tramps Like Us* book and is now at the Rhode Island School of Design, had put together [Experience Music Project's] pop music conferences when he worked out in Seattle. So I hooked up with Dan, and he gave me some suggestions of people I should talk to, like Jefferson Cowie, June Skinner Sawyers, and some others. So I just started contacting lots of people, and people started getting excited about the idea, which got me more excited about it.

When did you hook up with Dave Marsh?

The first time I talked to Dave was probably January or February of this year; between then and the conference, we probably talked at least once if not several times a month. As busy as he is, he would make time to share all kinds of different ideas, in terms of topical things for me to think about or people to contact. Dave turned me on to Daniel Wolff, who was very helpful; Dave turned

FOLLOWING

BY WOODY DRESDEN

It was with mixed emotions on the first morning of the "Glory Days" Springsteen Symposium, that I sat and waited for the opening session to begin. I wondered what this event would yield for me, and what had made me decide to attend. Was it a desire to learn more about this famous rock icon, or was I searching for some type of bond with others who share this common interest? Would I find fulfillment, or would I be lost in the flood of academic jargon or obsessed fans looking for a fix?

I am just an average guy, a blue-collar worker from the Midwest. Yes, I am a fan, an admirer. Like many fans, I can quote the words to about every song from memory. All too well, I understood Springsteen when he wrote, "I got a job working construction... but lately there ain't been much work on account of the economy." I knew exactly how Springsteen's work had affected my life. What about everyone else, why were they on this journey?

As the opening sessions progressed, Barbara Hall (creator, *Joan of Arcadia)* would speak about how Bruce had influenced her life. It involved a realization that would make her dump a boyfriend after her first Springsteen concert and choose her future career path. It would involve her feelings of despair after hearing the *Nebraska* album, and the emotions she encountered the first time she listened to "The River" and heard those haunting words, "Is a dream a lie if it don't come true, or is it something worse?"

Bill Ayers, a former priest and director for World Hunger Year, delivered a tearful and compelling story of his ties to Springsteen. A long time food bank supporter, Springsteen had come in contact with Ayers through the charity and touched him with not only his financial support for the organization, but his kindness and compassion for those less fortunate.

The second day, I befriended several attendees at my dinner table. During the meal, they convinced me to accompany them that night to the legendary Jersey shore bar, the Stone Pony. Gary U.S. Bonds was scheduled to perform, as well as E Street Band member Soozie Tyrell. It would be a night I will never forget. An opportunity to be in the town, and at a place where a part of rock history had been made years before.

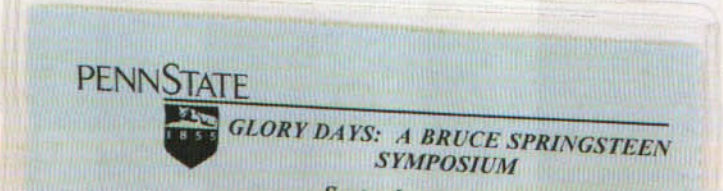
It was at that dinner we heard Bobby Muller of Vietnam Veterans of America tell his story and talk about the effect Springsteen had on his life and the organization he represented.

I knew his story through Dave Marsh's book, *Glory Days*. I was deeply moved by Muller's presentation, which told of the destitute situations experienced by many of the Vietnam veterans—those young men and women who had served their country in Vietnam and then were abandoned by the government and disregarded by the American public. It was Bruce who got involved and, in Bobby's words, "single-handedly helped save the organization."

After his speech, Muller pointed to me and another man to assist in lifting him off the stage. I never dreamed I would have the opportunity to meet him, let alone shake his hand and thank him for his work.

I am a very private person, and I am not one who wears his heart on his sleeve; self-disclosure has always been difficult for me. But on that Jersey night as we drove to Asbury Park, my newfound friends would learn about my deepest pain, and how Bruce's words and music pulled me from desolation in the darkest time of my life. For without his music, hours of horseback riding, a few close friends, and my family support, I would not be here today.

I became familiar with Springsteen during the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour. I went to the concert and later found myself making multiple trips to the store to buy all of his previous recordings.



THE RIVER

I could never imagine the impact this man would have on my life. Before the end of the *Tunnel of Love* tour, my father and my two sisters would be diagnosed with cancer. Both of my sisters would lose their battle, and it would be the first time in my life that I would see my father cry.

During the symposium, a recurring thought was expressed that songs can take on different meanings as we grow older and new situations arise. Many spoke of the catastrophe in New Orleans changing the meaning of "The River" for them—those same words which had such an emotional effect on Barbara Hall years before, and which would haunt me at night in my dreams. After the passing of my sisters, I thought about their lives, their hopes and dreams. Their dreams were so simple, but never obtained. I found myself asking the question from "The River": is a dream a lie if it don't come true?

I HAD NOT ONLY TAKEN AN INTELLECTUAL JOURNEY, BUT A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY AS WELL.

Throughout the weekend, many more people related heartfelt stories of their own battles, and how Springsteen's work provided them a lifeline of hope. The reporter from Florida, and her victory over breast cancer; the journalist from England who survived isolationism during the battles with her parents for her independence and her unwillingness to conform to the traditional ways of their native India.

Before the conference was over, attendees would be exposed to a myriad of individuals from the Springsteen circle: past and present band members, album cover photographers, authors, music critics, journalists, and producers.

There would be lectures, discussions, and arguments about Springsteen and religion, feminism, racism, and liberalism. Not to mention how his music has been affected by the styles of folk, soul, punk, and hip-hop music. There was even an opportunity to observe a live radio broadcast hosted by music critic Dave Marsh. Attendees were given a multitude of experiences and exposure to things many of them had only read about or seen on television, each one completing some part of their own journey through the interaction and bonds they formed with others.

By the time the conference ended I, too, had completed my journey. I knew the answer to my question. I knew why I was there. For I had not only taken an intellectual journey, but a spiritual journey as well. I had gained strength from hearing the life experiences of others and interacting with them on a peer level. I had found a new community, and they had found me.

I guess I knew the answer all along, but I just needed to hear it again. I had learned it from my parents, as they learned it from their parents. Just as the characters in Springsteen's later songs "grow up" and realize that we all need to belong, we need to support and be supported by our fellow man and find our place in our communities.

An attendee asked the panel of music journalists on the last day of the symposium if Springsteen's work would last for future generations. There was an instant and unanimous *yes*—each song can hold a different meaning for each person., and as they go through life that meaning can, and probably will, change. It will never lose its value; it will just evolve with time.

This is true on so many levels. As for me, *Nebraska* is not an album of despair; it is full of hope, too. I find strength in that one line, "still at the end of every hard-earned day people find some reason to believe." I also know that "me and Mary" from "The River" are now sitting on their porch somewhere, smiling.

JOHN CAVANAUGH PHOTO

Bernhard welcomes keynote speaker Dave Marsh

me on to Barbara Hall. And then each of those folks had other people. So it was really a whole networking and relationship-building thing.

And then Ken and Jerry, being the academics of the bunch here, were very helpful in helping me to define some of the proposal tracks. We weren't sure what to expect when we put that out—whether we would get ten proposals or a thousand. I was pleasantly surprised that we got about 200-plus, and from all over the place. The really cool thing was that, even though we suggested some topics, it was hard to anticipate some of the stuff we would get. So much, for instance, on psychology and Springsteen—really fascinating perspectives.

What's the most out-of-left-field submission you got?

There was that one that we got that we accepted—it may have even been the first one that came in—and I was just not expecting it. I've got it right here... "Art Imitates Life: Crime, Social Justice and Equity in the Lyrics of Bruce Springsteen." The description says: "Strain theory is the criminology theory that attempts to explain criminal behavior as a reaction to one's location in an aversive environment from which one cannot easily escape.... The music of Bruce Springsteen gives popular voice to strain theory." I never would have envisioned anyone submitting something like that—but again, that's one of the beauties of this conference, that there are so many different ways to interpret the music and lyrics of Bruce.

That was one of the frustrating things, too—there were so many different perspectives being offered at the same time, there were a lot of things I wanted to see but wasn't able to. Did you consider reducing the number of events or breakout sessions?

I did. And it came down to two things. Quite honestly, part of it was a financial decision. One of the things I had to consider, because it was a first-year program, was whether or not somebody would come if they weren't presenting. And I didn't know that at the time. The conference cost a lot of money to put on, and so I needed to ensure a certain number of people. But the second thing was, we had so many interesting topics, and we had to think about this as being a one-time-only event—in case we never did this thing again, we wanted to pack in as much as possible. I knew that would be one source of frustration for people, because we had so much that there was no way to really repeat anything, either—it was really a packed in three days. We put it all in there.

And when I call that "frustrating," I mean, it's a nice problem to have—an embarrassment of riches.

Exactly. If we do this again—and it seems like there's a lot of people clamoring for this again at some point—I would like to consider limiting the number of sessions per time slot, because I have a better idea now that there is an audience out there for this. In fact, I think the second one could be bigger, because

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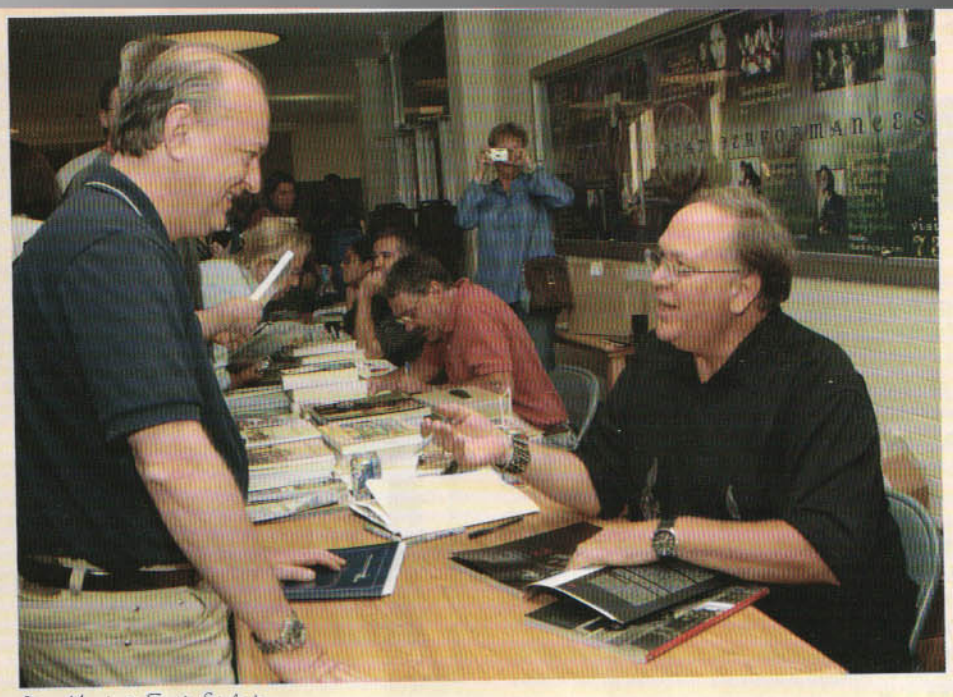
of word of mouth. So I'm less concerned from a financial standpoint, now that it's a known entity, but from a programmatic standpoint I would definitely consider limiting it.

At the same time, I want to say that we were relatively selective in what we chose. Anything that appeared inappropriate, or not at the level of this audience, overly simplistic or just too obvious to people, we were not afraid to turn things down. And still, there was so much good stuff that it was hard to choose.



Dave Marsh & Frank Stefanko

DEBRA L. ROTHENBERG PHOTO

I think there were a lot of people—as several people mentioned over the course of the weekend—who imagined this might be more of a glorified fan convention. Was that a concern for you as you were putting it together?

Yeah, it was. The initial reaction, at least from some folks, was, "What is this, a Trekkie convention?" Particularly as I was talking to the media as I was putting this thing together, I had to make it very clear that yes, everybody or just about everybody that would be attending would be a fan of Bruce Springsteen's, but it was not a fan convention. It was really an opportunity to have an educational conference around the works of an important American figure. That's the way I tried to hammer this home with everyone I was talking to, particularly people that I wanted to get as my keynote speakers—that it was different.

And what about Dave? Was he into it from the beginning, or did he take some convincing along those lines?

He took a bit of convincing, but not that much. I e-mailed him at first, and he said—and Dave will tell you this—"I'm the most *non*-academic person out there." But I think as he started talking through some of the possibilities with me, for instance "Catholicism and Springsteen," he started getting excited. Because no one's ever really had a formal opportunity to sit down and really talk about this stuff. So we came up with the whole thing about ethnic diversity, and some of the other general session ideas. It didn't take too much convincing—probably by the end of our first phone call he was relatively sold on the concept.

Having Thom Zimny there to unveil the Hammersmith footage was quite a coup—how did that come together?

I kept having this idea that we could world premiere something at this event, and I kept prodding—that's how it started. Closer to the event, Dave started saying, "Well, there may be a possibility to do something." It was touch-and-go for a while, because ultimately, it was up to Bruce, and certainly Jon [Landau] and Barbara [Carr], and Thom. Thom came on Sunday, and it may have been Saturday or certainly not sooner than Friday when Thom called me and said, "We're a go." He was going to come anyway, and near the end, but they decided if they couldn't show Hammersmith, they probably would have shown something off of *Storytellers* or *Live in New York City*. So I just kept saying, "Can we world premiere something? Can we world premiere something? Can we world premiere something?" Once I dig my heels in... I mean, I'm polite about it, but I'm persistent. "Can we world premiere something?" *[Laughs]* And it was obviously one of the highlights, if not the biggest highlight of the conference. It was kind of mind-blowing, and it was really cool to have Thom there.

Clearly the work didn't stop as soon as the weekend started. Were you able to enjoy yourself?

You know, I was. I have to thank my staff a lot for that. I had indicated to them that this one was a little different to me, and I really wanted to try to be able to enjoy myself and attend some of the events. I didn't get to sit and soak up a lot of the breakout sessions, which would have been nice, but I really didn't miss a whole lot of any of the general sessions. Overall it was wonderful and memorable for me just like it was for a lot of people. And I clearly enjoyed my time at the Stone Pony. *[Laughs]*

Did you book those Pony shows as well?

Yeah—with a lot of help from Bob Benjamin, a big thank you goes out to him. I probably talked to Bob more than anybody during this entire planning. I really didn't have a lot of experience booking musical events; I've done conferences for years and years, but musical events were not my forte. My first thought was that I wanted to have Joe Grushecky play. And in order to get Joe to play, I had to talk to Bob. Well, Bob did a nice job putting that together, and getting Boccigalupe and some other folks. But I was struggling, trying to figure out what the heck we were going to do for Saturday night. The big thing I wanted to do—and I probably started annoying Sam Moore's wife, because she books his shows—I'm like, man, we've gotta have Sam here. And she says, "You're not going to get Sam there, because it's my 60th birthday, and he's gotta take me on a cruise!" So finally I gave up on that. *[Laughs]* So finally I was just like, "Well, Bob knows everybody... why don't I just hire Bob to help me out?" So he and I talked a lot, and he would bounce ideas off me, and ultimately I would make the choices as to who was to be selected. I got approached a lot by tribute bands, but we made a fairly conscious decision that it would be better to have musical acts that have really influenced or have been influenced by Bruce, rather than a tribute band—in general, we really wanted to have artists like Joe, or Gary U.S. Bonds, or Soozie Tyrell. One of the bands that we thought about getting was La Bamba and his 18-piece band, which would have been cool, but they just couldn't bring the whole group together. But I think we got a really good lineup.

And what was nice was—I mean, I'd been to the Stone Pony before, but I think a lot of people who came to this event were in many cases life-long Bruce fans who, because of geographic circumstances, had never made the trek to Asbury Park.

I was wondering how far people traveled. Where did people come from, and who traveled the farthest?

Well, you'd have to get out your world map... but there were two people there from Japan, and one guy from Australia. We had at least a few people from Sweden, a few from Italy, several people from Canada—two from Nova Scotia, actually, which was interesting. Great Britain, Ireland, France.... Out of about 320 people, there were probably about 30 from out of the country. So it was a decent number. And if you count the woman who accompanied Bobby Muller, she was from Vietnam... I don't know if that counts or not, but she attended his speech. *[Laughs]*

We actually had one guy from Mexico who submitted a paper but then couldn't come; he was going to give a Mexican perspective on Bruce, and that would have been really cool, but unfortunately he just couldn't make it. But there were 34 states and the District of Columbia represented as well, and really, it goes to show the impact of Bruce's music. You can say Philadelphia or Boston or where-have-

JOHN CAVANAUGH PHOTO

you are hotbeds of Springsteen's music, but clearly it has impacted people far and wide. So I talked to a lot of people who were at the Stone Pony for the first time, and it was really gratifying—to them it was almost like going to Mecca.

I'll tell you, though, those nights at the Pony made it tough to get up in the morning...

Oh, I know! That's another thing we'll have to think about for next time. I definitely want to do this again, but if you asked me what I would put on the agenda, I couldn't tell you. That's why I keep saying, "Well, three years from now...." Bruce is going to continue to evolve and grow as a vital artist, in my opinion, and probably in a lot of people's opinions, so I think that in and of itself will bring about a number of different areas that we can explore. And then I'll certainly be getting feedback from folks once we do decide on dates, as far as what we want to continue to explore, what other topics were not explored, different speakers, that kind of thing.

And yeah, the big question I keep hearing is "When's there going to be another one?" So you're thinking three years, roughly?

I think so. That could change, but it really is a massive undertaking. And I really want the material to be fresh—I want people to come back and have another special experience. That doesn't mean that everything has to be completely changed—you know, Dave Marsh could come back and talk about something different, and same for some of the other people that came. But I want to think about who else is out there that would be integrally important to make it a special event. And I mean, who knows, next time around, other E Street Band members, someone from Landau Management or Bruce himself, maybe they would be interested in participating in some way now that it is more of a known entity.

Well, you've set a good precedent. As long as there's not another ticket onsale on the same weekend next time.

Yeah, what's up with that? *[Laughs]* I had heard a rumor about it a week or so before they announced the [September 10 *Devils & Dust* tour] onsale date, and I was like, you gotta be kidding me! I contacted Landau Management, and I was like, "Come on, give me a break! I put thousands of hours into this, can't you put it off until the following weekend? And they said, "You know, it's not just us—Ticketmaster plays a role in this whole thing, too." So, yeah, next time that's going to be written into some contract with Landau Management that they're not allowed to do that. *[Laughs]*

Did you get any word from them, or from Bruce, about the symposium at all?

I think by the end of it, they saw what happened and were very pleased with it. I heard from Tammy at Jon Landau Management, who thanked me and congratulated me and everything, so I think they were pleased by it. You know, every time I e-mail her... *[laughs]* I e-mailed Tammy the other day and said, "I'm going to be in Philly, I'm still trying to get my autographed [symposium] program.... you know, I'd be happy to go backstage and just..." *[laughs]* I mean, I'm still kind of curious. It would be nice to hear from the horse's mouth. A lot of people told me, "It was really good that he wasn't there, because we were able to kind of talk objectively about his life and works," and things like that; at the same time, it would be nice to know what he thought. But I think his camp was happy with the outcome.

Class dismissed! Soozie Tyrell at the Pony

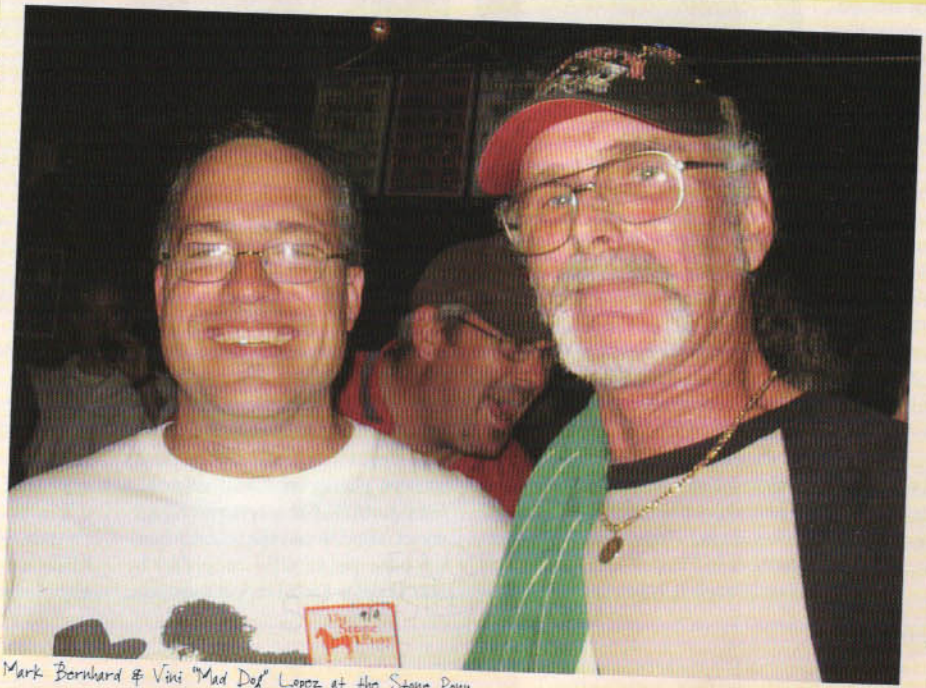
One question that I got from a few reporters was, "Isn't it weird to do this while Bruce is still alive?" And my reaction was: Why? Why is that weird? Isn't this the perfect time to do it? While his work is still continuing, still vital and evolving. Is this really that rare? Have there been similar conferences?

Ken Womack told me that there was a Beatles conference about ten years ago, and I think there's been some stuff out there on [Bob] Dylan. Colleen Sheehy is doing a Dylan thing with the University of Minnesota, I think in '07. But it's not very prevalent—there's not a lot of it out there.

Well, blaze that trail!

Yeah, we're going to do that. In fact, I have a meeting today with one of my vice presidents, and we're just going to begin discussing what else we can do. Not just Bruce stuff—there was some talk about working with the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame to do a Beatles conference in Cleveland. We're talking about doing a Black Gospel Music conference. So we're looking at making a series of these things. It will always come back—my content area of expertise is Bruce, and it will eventually swing full circle back to him. But I do think there are opportunities to study other vital artists. Again, it's not that often—you see a lot of conferences out there on, like, Edgar Allen Poe, or people who are dead. I think what this proves is that there is a real opportunity to study living artists who are vital, whether it be making vital music or vital art, who are doing something that has an impact on a lot of people.

DALE GOLDFARB PHOTO



Mark Bernhard & Vini "Mad Dog" Lopez at the Stone Pony

ON COLLECTING

By Fred Mills

The Point Night
(Crystal Cat 2CD)
Getting to the Point
(Doberman 2CDR)
VENUE: The Point
CITY: Dublin, Ireland
DATE: May 24, 2005
SOUND QUALITY: 8.5 / 9
PERFORMANCE: 9
PACKAGING: 9 / 8

Dueling-discs time for the first night of the European *D&D* tour—literally, a cat-and dog-fight. Doberman informs *Backstreets* that the in-house pups were sent out to the front lines of Dublin to capture the best tape possible and indeed, *Getting to the Point* sounds just about perfect: very clear, very close in ambiance, practically a front-row experience—including the experience of the taper sitting beside a couple of awed armchair commentators.

Crystal Cat, too, typically marshals its own taping troops, although the recent past has seen the label occasionally relying on the kindness of strangers, Internet-based and otherwise. By way of an audio marker, *The Point Night* contains a brief but noticeable dropout at the 1:37 mark in "Racing in the Street," so interested parties may want to make their own A/B comparisons with circulating versions of the show. For now, though, a source informs us that this, like Doberman's, is a CC original. Note that there's subtle hiss during the softest portions and during Bruce's spoken passages—the result, obviously, of CC equalizing the volume levels so his words are more readily heard. It's not particularly distracting, however, no more than it was on some of the better boots from the *Tom Joad* tour.

Packaging-wise, Doberman does its usual fine job: no frills, but with a nice four-page color booklet. But of course Crystal Cat always excels in that area and this one's no exception: deluxe picture CDs, slick-stock booklet and tray panel, sharp color photos of both Bruce and the venue. Also included are some brief liner notes about the show that were copied verbatim from the setlists portion of Backstreets.com; at least CC credited us! The label sweetens the deal by adding three bonus tracks: "Empty Sky" and "Two Faces" (Oakland, 6/5/05) and "Paradise" (Chicago, 5/11/05).

On balance, either release will serve you, the discriminating collector, well. You can read a full report from the Dublin concert (and, for that matter, the other *D&D* shows featured on the titles being discussed here) in the very issue of *Backstreets* you are now holding.

Backstreets *does not endorse the illegal sale of bootleg recordings, nor can we advise as to their legality or how they may be obtained.*

Yabba-Dabba-Do
(Doberman 2CDR)
VENUE: Royal Albert Hall
CITY: London, England
DATE: May 28, 2005
SOUND QUALITY: 8
PERFORMANCE: 10
PACKAGING: 7

For some reason that I can't quite pinpoint, I keep returning to this particular *D&D* tour Bruceleg. It doesn't boast the same near-flawless sound as, say, several recent Godfather and Crystal Cat releases, and it's even got some distracting "yahoo" moments, crowd noise-wise, such as in "Devils & Dust" when a self-styled harmony vocalist apparently decides he wants to audition as a backup singer for Bruce. Highly vocal commentators in the vicinity of Doberman's in-house taper are also audible on the tape (one of whom is duly rewarded by a "shut the fuck up!" from a nearby punter).

But whether due to this being a slightly looser, more relaxed show from the previous night at the Royal Albert Hall (also available on Doberman as *Hotter Than Hell*) or that ever-elusive "ambiance" factor, *Yabba-Dabba-Do* is a must-hear. Indeed, ambiance may be key: the taper was clearly not positioned directly in front of a P.A. stack, probably somewhere at a midway point; so while some tapes are very "close" in feel, this one has a delicious kind of echoey warmth that borders on surround sound. "The Rising," for example, rings out like a church bell reverberating throughout a cathedral. Likewise, at that point near the end of "The Promised Land" when Bruce hits those mournful, wordless falsettos, it sounds like a spirit has entered the room and is swirling all around you. Both songs, and much of this show, will take your breath away.

Devils and Dust in Madrid
(Whoopy Cat 2CD)
VENUE: Palacio De Deportes De La Comunidad
CITY: Madrid, Spain
DATE: June 2, 2005
SOUND QUALITY: 8
PERFORMANCE: 8
PACKAGING: 7

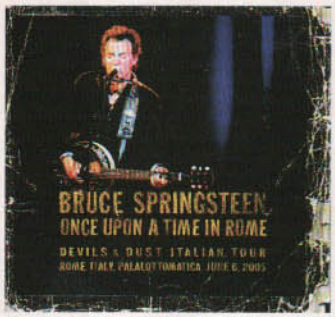
The late, great Whoopy Cat returns. Springsteen collectors will recall the Whoopy Cat name; back in the mid-to-late '90s the label was responsible for numerous top-shelf Bruce boots before going into self-imposed hibernation. For a return engagement, the feline taps a solid-quality tape personally recorded by the label's Spanish connection. The taper appears to have staked out a prime spot as Bruce's vocals are as clear as a bell—ditto his guitar—with the only real sonic drawback being an exceptionally noisy crowd that sometimes overwhelms the songs' beginnings and can occasionally be heard commenting at a low volume during soft passages.

Packaging is nice, if nominal, just a two-sided insert and two-sided tray panel; one of the live photos is from that same now-familiar sequence of Bruce surrounded by a cluster of fans (many of them reaching out and grabbing Bruce, who's gamely trying to keep playing) that the Doberman used for the front cover of its *Yabba Dabba Doo* title.

A Fistful of Songs in Rome
(Anubis 2CDR)
Once Upon a Time in Rome
(Godfather 2CD)
VENUE: Palalottomatica Arena
CITY: Rome, Italy
DATE: June 6, 2005
SOUND QUALITY: 9 / 9
PERFORMANCE: 10
PACKAGING: 9 / 10

Taking the stage to the introductory strains of composer Ennio Morricone's theme for *Once Upon a Time in the West*, Bruce commences with "I'm on Fire," performing on banjo and emitting some *Fistful of Dollars*/Morricone-esque whistles. The reason for all this becomes clear when he dedicates the song to Morricone ("Il Maestro"), rumored to be in attendance. Can we one day expect a Morricone-scored film titled *Once Upon a Time in Freehold*?

There are several competing commercial bootlegs of the Rome show. One of them, *Italian Heart*, released on the Tam Tam label, appeared just before press time; it's a six-CD box additionally containing Bologna (June 4) and Milano (June 7). As Godfather also did its own separate Bologna



and Milano titles (respectively, *The Powerful Thing* and *Dream Milano Dream*), it's likely that Tam Tam copied the three Godfather sets. At any rate, regarding the two Romes at hand: sound-wise it's probably a tossup as both are superb recordings, very "close" in feel and with crowd noise kept to a bare minimum—remarkable in itself, since this is, after all, an Italian audience! Note, however, they are definitely different recordings, as evidenced by a subtle harsh quality to the vocals on the Godfather version (it's also slightly hotter in feel). Anubis personally taped the show; no word on whether Godfather did the same.

The Anubis release is a pro-CDR, limited to 99 numbered copies; the four-page booklet and two-sided tray panel feature photos from the actual concert, and the discs are picture CDs. Godfather's version comes in a gorgeous, tri-fold wallet/mini-LP design liberally decorated with photographs and liner notes. Godfather also adds two bonus cuts from 5/7/05, Denver: "The Promise" and "Cautious Man."

Keep the Fire Burning
(RR 2CDR)
VENUE: Ahoy
CITY: Rotterdam, Netherlands
DATE: June 19, 2005
SOUND QUALITY: 7
PERFORMANCE: 10
PACKAGING: 8

Compared to some *D&D* releases this suffers from having a slightly distant feel as well as crowd noise, and there are some inexplicable volume problems (notably during "Long Time Comin'," which almost turns inaudible around the 1:30 mark and stays that way for nearly a minute). But it is a special show. Bruce, apparently noting it's Father's Day back in the States, dwells several times on fatherhood ("LTC," "Adam Raised a Cain," "My Father's House," etc.). Piano dominates much of the concert's first half, too; the electric-to-acoustic piano segue in the middle of "Countin' on a Miracle" has to be one of the sweetest, most tender passages I've ever heard Bruce do.

Despite having somewhat generic artwork, the packaging is highly unusual in a collectible sense: It folds out in a modified, bi-fold wallet design containing an outer tab that slips into the left sleeve to keep everything secure. You may want to add some paper or a cardboard buffer in the middle, however, to keep this from getting crushed between other CDs in your collection, as the packaging is also quite thin.

Gothenburg Dust Night
(Crystal Cat 2CD)
VENUE: Scandinavium
CITY: Gothenburg, Sweden
DATE: June 23, 2005
SOUND QUALITY: 9
PERFORMANCE: 10
PACKAGING: 9

As everyone no doubt knows by now, both Sweden shows were extremely special ones in terms of setlists. In Gothenburg, for starters, "Into the Fire" (on pump organ) returned as concert opener, its hymnal quality by some measures more profound than the more frequently tapped "My Beautiful Reward." And the by-request-only "Fade Away" that turned up mid-set was without a doubt one of the more unexpected tour premieres; while Bruce was clearly straining to hit the notes in the chorus, in this intimate context his wobbly singing came off more soulful than sour.

Prior to their release, both *Gothenburg Dust Night* and *Stockholm Dust Night* were touted as being the best-sounding titles yet from the tour, although even just among the Crystal Cat releases I'd personally give the nod to *Paris Dust Night* (6/20/05) for its somewhat hotter sound on the vocals. But that's all subjective; anything with a "9" rating or above probably isn't going to disappoint anyone.

One small complaint about the eight-page booklet: I'd prefer to see some text or commentary about the show alongside the photos instead of mini-reproductions of Swedish newspapers. Yes, Crystal Cat does call Sweden home, but English translations of those articles would've been an appropriate touch.

Stockholm Dust Night
(Crystal Cat 2CD)
VENUE: Hovet
CITY: Stockholm, Sweden
DATE: June 25, 2005
SOUND QUALITY: 9.5
PERFORMANCE: 10
PACKAGING: 9

The second night in Sweden brought a second round of surprises, beginning with the radical organ overhaul of set-opener "Downbound Train"; the song always had a yearning, urgent quality, but here an unexpected gospel quality bubbled to the surface, and Bruce put a soulful, drawling edge to his vocals, too. "Point Blank," always elegiac and somber when performed by the E Street Band, was even darker and more mournful. And tour premiere "Blinded by the Light" brought down the house, with fans taking a temporary reprieve from the "no noise" rule.

The sound is crisp and full-bodied, like a fine cheese-and-wine midnight snack, and it slightly edges out *Gothenburg Dust Night* if you're trying to decide between the two. The label decided to add a couple bonus tracks on Disc 2 as well: "A Good Man is Hard to Find (Pittsburgh)" (St. Paul, MN, 5/10/05) and "Iceman" (Philadelphia, 5/17/05). There's no big need for bonus material on a *D&D* tour boot, as each document holds up fine as a self-contained item. But no one's going to complain about getting value for money—here you're getting discs that clock in at 76 and 79 minutes respectively. There's also a thick, 12-page booklet, although per my comments about CC's Gothenburg release, I'd rather have some text to go with the photos, setlists, tour poster and ticket repros, etc.

Keep on Dreamin'
(Godfather 2CD)
VENUE: ICC Halle
CITY: Berlin, Germany
DATE: June 28, 2005
SOUND QUALITY: 10
PERFORMANCE: 9
PACKAGING: 10

By and large, Godfather's been giving the venerable Crystal Cat a serious run for the money in the *D&D* bootleg competition, issuing a number of titles that boast stunning audio. This one is clear-as-a-bell, FM-quality flawless, possibly the best *D&D* release to date—with equally enticing artwork. On that latter count it probably comes down to personal preference whether you like CC's traditional jewel-box-and-booklet design over Godfather's tri-fold, mini-LP-sleeve-style wallet, but there's no question the Godfather aesthetics are appealing.

At any rate, *Keep on Dreamin'* hails from the final night of the Euro leg. You've seen the setlist, now listen to such choice entries as *Tunnel of Love*'s gentle "Two Faces" and the blooze guit-fueled "Spare Parts" (featuring Bruce

Continued page 121

As Bruce Springsteen embarked on a solo tour in late April in support of his new album *Devils & Dust*, the use of internet bandwidth, padded mailers, and stamps increased dramatically amongst fans.

The nature of the *Devils & Dust* tour is very conducive to taping in that Bruce asks the audience for quiet during the show, so audience noise during a song, a major factor when taping a full band show, is greatly reduced. Most recordings will have clear sound—at least during the music. The biggest challenge with regard to audience noise on this tour comes between songs: you don't want a recording where you get blown away by the crowd after each number. Fortunately, a lot of recordings stand up well to that test.

As mentioned in the last issue, recordings of both rehearsal shows from Asbury Park were uploaded to the binary newsgroup alt.binaries.music.springsteen and BitTorrent sites quickly—within days. That trend continued when the tour proper began, as almost every show from the first U.S. leg, many in excellent quality, circulated in cyberspace not long after each performance. This immediate gratification could easily spoil the online community, but fortunately, most fans realize how much work it takes for the tapers to get a recording, convert, and upload it—definitely not a trivial process.

"Travis Bickle" continued to amaze as he uploaded recordings from Philly and Boston the day after each show. However, neither one could be called definitive, as "JB" was at both shows with his recording equipment as well, with better results.

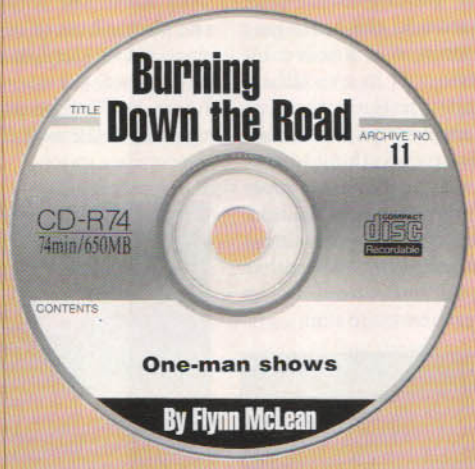
The best two recordings from the first U.S. leg are from the May 5 show in Oakland and the May 15 show in Cleveland. The Oakland recording was uploaded with slight cuts between the songs, but the sound quality makes up for that to some extent. An unedited version has had limited circulation. The "Neo" recording of the Cleveland show is probably the definitive one from the first leg. Sharp sound, balanced post-song applause, and a unique set list ("Stolen Car" and "Wreck on the Highway") makes this recording really stand out.

There are still some tapers who prefer to keep things "old school" and have circulated their recordings with the request that they not be uploaded, and that copies be distributed via "snail mail" only. The two L.A. shows were given this treatment by "JEMS," and the second night, May 3, ranks not far behind Cleveland and Oakland in sound quality. Another old school recording is from the May 11 show in Chicago, and the quality on that one is quite good as well. People should definitely track down a recording of the Chicago show (JB has a version as well), as the impromptu a cappella verse of "Land of Hope and Dreams" should be heard by all.

Three different recordings of the May 19 Meadowlands show surfaced, and while one of them (the "Drawcatc" recording) suffers from slight distortion on the louder segments, the other two, from "Mike T" and JB, both have above-average sound and are very similar in quality.

Obviously, as with the previous tour, there are often multiple recordings of a single show, and it can be confusing to keep track. To that end, one collector has put together a website that aims to list all the known, circulating recordings from each show (the same collector also tracked recordings from the *Rising* tour). You can find the *Devils & Dust* tour listing at http://members.megapipe.net/jgenuardi/carddt05.htm.

FROM THE EUROPEAN TOUR, THERE is practically an embarrassment of riches, as so many recordings are way above average. If you have to choose just one, you can basically go by the setlist. However, there are several that stand above the rest. Recordings from



both June 23 in Gothenberg and June 25 in Stockholm are excellent, and with varied set lists from both nights, collectors should track both down. Both have unobtrusive audience noise and are very sharp and close.

The June 16 show from Dusseldorf is another high quality recording with reasonable audience noise and a great set list that included the tour debuts of "I Wish I Were Blind" and "Mary's Place." One major difference between the European shows and the American shows was the clap-alongs during some of the more upbeat songs, such as "All I'm Thinkin' About" and "Leah." Surprisingly enough, these recordings do a great job of capturing the spirit without becoming *Clapping Night* in the process, and this Dusseldorf recording is a prime example.

The "Germain" version of the June 20 Paris show is another high quality recording with a good balance between the music and audience cheering. The vocals are way out in front, and Bruce's spoken introductions to songs are very clear.

Other high quality recordings from Europe include Rome (June 6), Munich (June 13), and Brussels (May 30). The show from Copenhagen on June 22 is excellent as well, but an early fade out to the only tour performance of "Spirit in the Night" brings it down a notch.

WHEN THE TOUR RETURNED FROM Europe, it was apparent that Bruce was still warming up and, more noticeably, reaching deep in the songbook in the set lists. The first big night of debuts was the July 18 show in Buffalo, and both "Bakerstuff" and Bickle were in the house with their equipment. While Bickle posted his recording within two days, and a solid recording it was, it was marred by slight digital noise and a "whooper" near the taper. Bakerstuff's recording was uploaded about a week later, and it was very strong with considerably less audience noise.

Two different recordings circulated from Bridgeport, CT, the "Scoper" version (posted the morning after the show) and Bakerstuff's, both very strong. However, Neo took Scoper's recording and tweaked it a bit to bring out the higher end and pump up the quieter sections of the show, and this is the one to get out of the three.

The end of July and early August—when Bruce really began creating setlists for the hardcores—is represented quite well on CDR. Neo was back in action, roadtripping to Columbus, OH, to record the July 31 show there, and the results are comparable to his Cleveland recording from earlier in the tour. With the excellent set list, this recording quickly became an early, and legitimate, nominee for best of tour. And when Bruce opened the Grand Rapids, MI, show on August 3 with the tour debut of "Tunnel of Love" a taper was there to capture the moment for another early best-of-tour contender.

An excellent albeit incomplete recording of the St. Louis, MO, show from August 6 is a notch below Columbus and Grand Rapids. The recording doesn't include "Highway Patrolman" and "Reno," and the taper was hesitant to make his recording available via BitTorrent. However, the taper did upload "Backstreets," "County Fair," and "Nothing Man," and the overwhelmingly positive response to those three songs among the online community convinced the taper to upload all of what he had.

WITH THE INCREDIBLE NUMBER OF songs Bruce has played on this tour, compilations are very popular. One BitTorrent user, "montys," has put together five discs (and counting) worth of rarities, putting discs together as the shows become available. The songs are not segued together, but, as the compiler stated, "This is an early listen to the songs as they come out, nothing more, and being offered as a favor to the traders." However, montys did put together a single disc containing all the songs from the *Tunnel of Love* album as performed on the current tour—in album order—that was edited seamlessly and became a very popular disc. Collectors may recognize the compiler as the same guy who put together the seven-tape (remember those?) set *Thundertracks* back in the mid-'90s, which was first distributed on the old Luckytown Digest.

A more formal compilation was put together and uploaded to the various e-places called

Handful of Dust. Thus far, three discs have been "released," with more likely to come. The segues aren't totally smooth, but the songs are sequenced in a show-like order and the compiler did seek out the best possible sources for the tracks. Unfortunately, no material from *Devils & Dust* is included on any of the discs.

DESPITE THE LACK OF PHYSICALITY OF the shows, DVD creators are still working their magic, and ScrewDevil was right there from the beginning, producing a 3-cam mix of the opening show in Detroit titled *Living in the Light*. The picture is steady for the most part, and the audio is dubbed from a clear audience recording.

ScrewDevil may not have been in Glendale, AZ, a few days later, but he took a previously-circulating video from SmokeyBoyVids and added chapters and menus, releasing it as *I've Been Out in the Desert*. The single camera is very steady, and the dubbed audio is excellent.

Another DVD worth checking out is from LAM Video and Cheesesteak Productions, documenting the May 19 show at the Continental Airlines Arena called *Attack of the Relatives*. The set incorporates a two-camera mix (with a steady picture, for the most part) and audio dubbed from JB's audience recording.

The June 4 show from Bologna is the best DVD to surface from the European leg thus far. Although it doesn't feature multiple cameras, this release—titled, appropriately enough, *Bologna '05*—does feature some of the most steady audience-shot footage around, which goes a long way toward watchability. The audio is from the video camera, but it's only a matter of time before a dubbed version surfaces.

One very interesting and unique DVD to surface has been a lengthy interview Bruce did with Australia journalist Ian "Molly" Meldrum as part of the *Greatest Hits* promotional push in early 1995. Although Meldrum submitted his questions to Springsteen's management before the interview, he soon veered off the approved path, and what was supposed to have been a 15-minute interview turned into a 90-minute session. Meldrum asked questions worthy of die-hards, including discussion of unreleased songs and the evolution of "Thunder Road" it easily ranks as one of the most fascinating interviews to see the light of the day.

WHEN WE LAST SPOKE, A SOUNDBOARD recording of the second Christic Institute benefit concert from November 17, 1990, had just surfaced. Unfortunately, the original raw recording had very low levels, and several song introductions weren't included, presumably to make it fit on one disc. To date, the original soundboard recording has spawned two different remasters, one by the legendary "Prodigal Son" and another by "Hojo" (plus the silver disc release from Crystal Cat called *Christic Night*). The Hojo remaster used an audience tape to fill in the gaps from the soundboard recording, and while this sounds like a good concept in theory, the execution just reinforced how good the new soundboard sounds with an obvious gap in perspective and quality. Obviously, the inclusion of the song introductions and complete versions of "Tougher Than the Rest" and "Across the Borderline" make for a better listening experience than the original chopped-up soundboard, but the drop-off in quality is too great for this one to be called definitive.

Prodigal Son's remaster aimed to simply smooth out the between-song edits as well as to add some ambiance, and the result is excellent. If you didn't know about the cuts, you wouldn't notice, as the segues are seamless. Prodigal Son also executed excellent transitions from soundboard to audience source at the end of "Tougher Than the Rest" and "Across the Borderline."

To complete our coverage of the Christic shows, we must touch on the *Christic Night* release from Crystal Cat. The Cat took the same approach as Hojo, using an audience recording to fill in the missing pieces from the soundboard recording, and the results are mixed. While the two sources have been equalized so that the transitions between the two is minimized, in making the audience sound crisp, the high-end has been boosted to the point of sounding slightly harsh.

Which one is the definitive one? Well, that's up to the individual listener: Do you want a version with introductions to all the songs? If yes, then the Crystal Cat version is the one to get. (There are interesting bonus tracks as well; instead of including audience recordings from the first night, the Cat went with Bruce's four-song set from the SOS Racisme rally from Paris, France, on June 18, 1988.) Are you willing to sacrifice those introductions for a smoother overall sound? Then the Prodigal Son remaster is the one to track down. Of course, obsessive types (who, me?) will just want to get both of them.

Just to add more factors into the Christic equation, new sources for both nights were recently available via BitTorrent. These "persic" versions are very clean, and for those wanting a complete recording of the first night (as compared to the edited version released as *Springsteen, Raitt, and Browne* on silver disc in the mid-'90s), this is the one to get. Quality is very similar to the *SRB* release—maybe even a tad crisper, as the music is very clear and upfront (although the audience cheering after each song can be somewhat intrusive). The second night's sound quality is above average, but with the soundboard and subsequent remasters, one can be excused for not tracking this one down.

In addition to the Christic shows, persic has also torrented many, many other recordings, mostly uncirculated. Two are from the Spectrum 1984 stand and were apparently the source recordings for several bonus tracks on *The Full Spectrum*, released by Doberman in the late '90s. The sound is excellent and should be considered must-haves for fans of the first leg of the *Born in the U.S.A.* tour. Other recordings torrented by persic include both the Oakland and Los Angeles stops of the Amnesty International tour, three shows from the 1988 Los Angeles stand, all three shows from the 1988 Worcester stand, and several shows from the Oakland and Los Angeles stands from October 1984. All are worth a listen.

"ON COLLECTING" from page 119

singing slightly off mic to great effect), the underrated (can we still call it that?) "Real World," the tour debut of "Sinaloa Cowboys," and an uncommonly warm "Hungry Heart." For the last of these, Bruce's German pal Wolfgang Niedecken joined in on vocals and guitar; sharp-minded fans will remember Niedecken from the video of "Hungry Heart" he shot with Bruce in '95. The photos lining the inner sleeve of the Godfather package are obviously taken from this Berlin show, as there's one of Niedecken and Springsteen onstage together—extra points for accuracy.

Straight Into Our Hearts

(Godfather 2CD)
VENUE: Bradley Center
CITY: Milwaukee, Wisconsin
DATE: August 7, 2005
SOUND QUALITY: 9
PERFORMANCE: 10
PACKAGING: 10

From the inclusion of no fewer than five *Nebraska* songs—"Open All Night," in fact, came unexpectedly right near the end, just before "Growin' Up"—to the somber "Point Blank"/"Racing in the Street" elegy to the tour premiere of "Frankie," the Milwaukee show was, as reviewers have noted, a darker, different *D&D* show—but not depressing.

Sound is outstanding, aside from just the tiniest hint of tape saturation distortion during a few of the louder segments. American audiences seemed to be louder than European ones on the *D&D* tour, but there are no distractions on this recording. Was this a shorter than usual show? Godfather was able to include four bonus tracks on Disc 2: "I Wish I Were Blind" (Portland, OR, 8/10/05), "Be True" and "Two For the Road" (Seattle, 8/11/05) and "Because the Night" (Vancouver, BC, 8/13/05); it all fits in the label's typically handsome tri-fold packaging.

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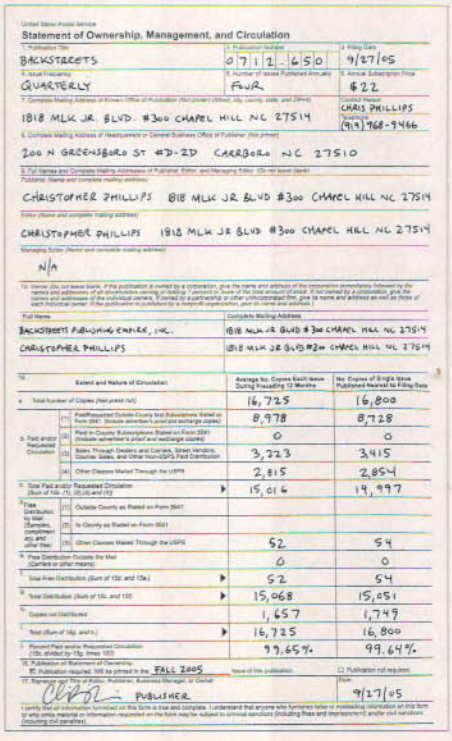

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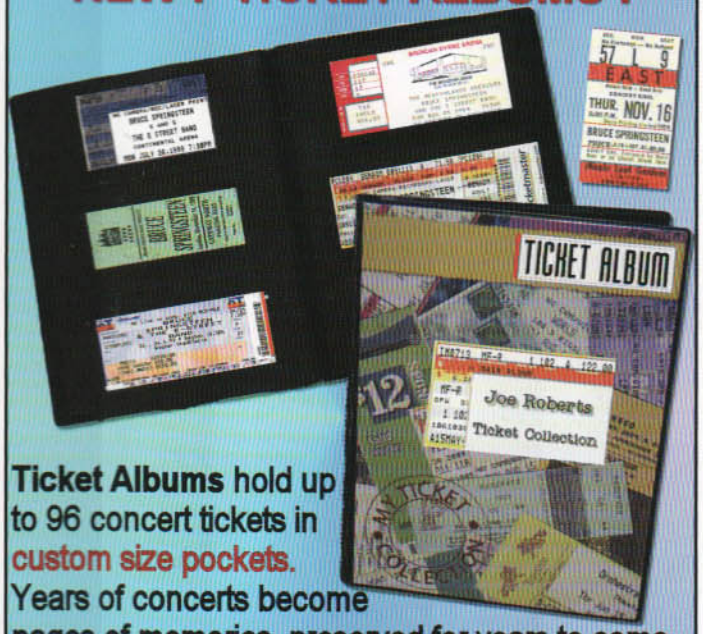

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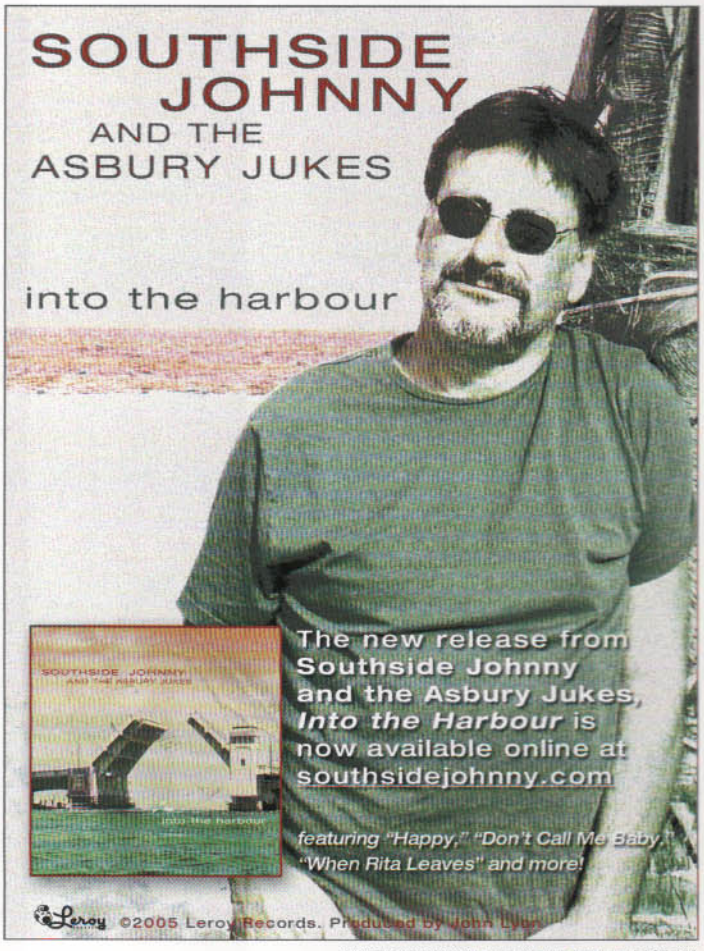

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